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Second Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 13 May 1998

Mercredi 13 mai 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 13 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 13 mai 1998

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I am once again standing here to plead with the Minister of Health to recognize that we have a crisis in the delivery of mental health care in northwestern Ontario and to call on her to take immediate action to deal with this situation.

The facts are clear. We have a severe shortage of psychiatric beds in our region and not enough psychiatrists or family doctors to deal with the present caseload. The 24-bed psychiatric unit at Thunder Bay Regional Hospital may have to close because of the doctor shortage, with these beds probably being transferred to the Lakehead Psychiatric Hospital. Yet the hospital, even with these additional duties, is still scheduled for closure in March 1999. Community supports promised by the minister are not in place and neither is the 12-bed adolescent treatment unit promised two years ago. The northwestern Ontario mental health agency, which was to coordinate the delivery of mental health in the future, is nowhere to be seen.

Minister, the crisis is real and can be ignored no longer. You must take action.

First of all, cancel the proposed closure of the Lakehead Psychiatric Hospital next March. The deadline is totally unrealistic and is causing enormous stress and confusion. Next, set up the northwestern Ontario mental health agency and give them the funding envelope to recruit the psychiatrists we need.

Free up funds immediately so the outpatients in our community can receive the help they need. Assertive community treatment teams are up and ready to go. They simply need approval from you to get to work so we can avoid the future tragedy of psychiatric patients being thrown in jail because no one was there to help them in a time of crisis. Minister, please help.

AIR QUALITY

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): According to a report released yesterday by the Ontario Medical Association, Windsor has the worst air in the country. Deaths from heart disease and respiratory problems are higher in our community than in any other. This is a health crisis we can no longer ignore.

One thing we can do is reduce the sulphur content in gasoline. Harmful emissions of sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds would be decreased and peak ozone levels would be lowered. I join with the OMA and others, like the Citizens Environment Alliance, in calling on the Harris government and the federal Liberals to enact strict measures to reduce the sulphur content in gasoline.

I am also asking that both levels of government do more to deal with transboundary air pollution. This summer Detroit Edison plans to restart the Connors Creek generating station. This is a 50-year-old coal-burning plant that is lacking in modern pollution control equipment. The operation of this plant will contribute to environmental and health problems in our community, and no doubt increase the up to 1,800 deaths per year in Ontario that are attributed to air pollution.

The deregulation of Ontario Hydro will lead to the startup of more dirty coal plants in the US, to the detriment of our health and our environment.

Is this the price the Ontario and federal Liberal governments expect us to pay so that their corporate buddies are assured cheap energy?

FISH KINCARDINE SALMON DERBY

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): I rise today to bring to the attention of all members of this Legislature a very special event taking place in my riding of Bruce from May 22 to May 31. May 22 will mark the launch of the 13th annual Fish Kincardine Salmon Derby in the town of Kincardine. This derby has attracted fishing enthusiasts from across Ontario and the northeastern United States to the scenic shores of Lake Huron since 1985.

Last year saw 953 entrants, who brought in over 15,500 pounds of fish to the derby's weigh stations. Last year's grand prize winner, Marvin Pitz of Kitchener, drove home in a Ford half-ton truck of which he had the use for one year to pull a 15-foot fishing boat with motor and trailer which he won by catching the winning 20.64-pound salmon.

This year it is estimated that the cash and prizes will total between \$70,000 and \$80,000. The grand prize is a 17-foot fishing boat, complete with motor and trailer, valued at over \$22,000.

Profits from the derby are used by the Lake Huron Fishing Club's Kincardine Brown Trout Hatchery, which annually returns over 100,000 healthy trout into Lake Huron.

Many people have worked very hard to make the Fish Kincardine Salmon Derby the continued success it is today. The derby is truly an excellent event, and I invite all my colleagues in the Legislature to take part and visit Kincardine, "where you're a stranger only once."

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): Yesterday we were scheduled to debate Bill 108, an act that will give municipalities authority to prosecute certain provincial offences.

Mon parti, avec l'Association des Juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario et l'Association du Barreau canadien, ont toujours dénoncé le projet de loi 108 parce qu'il ignore les droits des francophones et donc viole nos lois et même la constitution du Canada.

Municipalities are not bound by existing French-language legislation, and the Attorney General has consistently refused to clearly spell out such guarantees in Bill 108. Yesterday we were ready to debate such flagrant omission. The government chose instead to eliminate any discussion.

Bill 108 has been outstanding for some time. It received first reading on January 20, 1997, and has been the subject of valid criticism by legal experts, the Department of Justice, the official languages commissioner and the francophone community ever since. It's time for the government to do the right thing.

I am today introducing an amendment that will remove any doubt as to the obligation of the government in this area.

La motion que j'introduis aujourd'hui déclare que «le défendeur a le droit d'obtenir une audience équitable» et que ça doit inclure les droits aux services en français. Ces services «comprennent les droits en vertu de la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires et la Loi sur les services en français».

This amendment is consistent with provincial laws, with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, with the aspirations of Franco-Ontarians and with the expectations of the people of Ontario.

The government must never jeopardize the rights of Ontarians. I urge them to incorporate our amendment now.

1340

POLICE SERVICES

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): With this Tory government there's always a catch and inevitably the catch-22. Why just this morning, Mr Harris's crime control commissioner, Jim Brown — someone to never confuse the issues by mentioning the facts — was down in Niagara talking about this government, with great fanfare, how they announced they were going to put money into policing. Mr Brown, Mr Harris's envoy, is down there to explain to people in Niagara region that it's matching funds.

Mr Harris, you've already gutted Niagara region; you bled it dry. Your downloading has resulted in massive property tax increases and new user fees that are going right through the roof. There is no money left in Niagara region as a result, very specifically, of your policies. Niagara Regional Police Force is already down 80 officers, shy 80 officers of what should be its full complement.

This government's much-fanfare announcement means absolutely nothing to the welfare of police officers in Niagara region or to the public safety of residents of Niagara region. This government wants to talk a big game when it comes to crime, wants to talk real tough, but it never delivers and hasn't once again.

Premier, you're putting police officers' welfare at risk and you're exposing the people of Niagara region to great risk and endangering the public safety of those communities by your refusal to properly fund policing and police forces across this province.

WELLINGTON COUNTY FESTIVALS

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): Again this year, Wellington county boasts three of the most exciting cultural festivals in Ontario, offering people a wealth of live theatre and music choices: the Drayton Festival Theatre, the Theatre on the Grand in Fergus and the Elora Festival.

The Drayton Festival has seen phenomenal growth since its first season in 1991 and community support for the festival has been outstanding. Stage 2 of a \$1.5-million renovation to the theatre has just been completed, and in less than two years, \$1.2 million has been raised through audiences, members and fund-raisers. Tonight, May 13, is opening night and a new musical, *Show Stoppers*, written by Carl Ritchie and Drayton Festival artistic director, Alex Mustakas, will be premiering.

The Fergus Theatre on the Grand has several sold-out performances already and has seen an increase in its subscriptions of 30% from last year. A \$750,000 fund-raising campaign has been launched under the able management of Bruce Lloyd to enable the purchase and renovation of the Grand Theatre building. Through an intensive corporate sector partnership and the generosity of the town of Fergus, which contributed \$75,000, 25% of the capital project target has already been reached.

Theatre on the Grand will open its 1998 summer season on June 11 with the world premiere of *The Foursome* by leading Canadian playwright Norm Foster and directed by the Theatre on the Grand's artistic director, Chris McHarge.

The Elora Festival has a showcase of musical performances every summer and is in its 19th season. Proudly Canadian, the Elora Festival will be featuring three international Canadian guest conductors. The Elora Festival runs from July 10 to August 2.

There is definitely more to discover in Wellington. Our music and theatre festivals are renowned. We invite everyone to experience them this summer.

BETHLEHEM PLACE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Friends and supporters of Bethlehem Place are gathering in St Catharines to celebrate the 10th anniversary of this transition home which has played such a significant role in the lives of troubled individuals in our community.

I recall vividly the momentous day when the groundbreaking ceremony was held and the hope and goodwill that existed in the hearts and minds of its founders on that day. With strong support from the church community and others who are generous of spirit, a dream was transformed into reality when this special home opened its doors to those in need of help and understanding.

Bethlehem Place provides not only a physical home for its residents but also the kind of counselling and support which has allowed people to turn their lives around. Bethlehem Place helps people set individualized goals and tries to offer programs where people can develop what they need to achieve them.

Despite a significant reduction in provincial government funding in 1995, the directors and supporters of Bethlehem Place have embarked upon extensive fund-raising efforts and managed to maintain its ability to meet a need in our community.

To those with vision and a desire to assist others and to those with the sense of commitment and dedication to carry on despite difficult challenges, we owe a debt of gratitude. There is much to celebrate at Bethlehem Place today, a building which offers a haven and a helping hand.

DAVID SAWCHUK RIDE FOR
CAMP TRILLIUM

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I rise today with great pride to advise colleagues in the House of a great Hamiltonian who is setting out on an exceptional journey for an outstanding purpose. Don Sawchuk will begin the David Sawchuk Ride for Camp Trillium. In Don's own words, he says:

"David was my younger brother, my closest friend and someone I will always love. On July 9, 1991, my life changed forever. David died of cancer.

"When I reflect upon my memories of Dave, I remember his genuine love of life, family and friends. I remember his warm compassionate smile that persevered in light of his struggle with cancer. I remember watching a frightened child develop into a strong young man. In many ways, he remains a profound source of strength in my life.

"These memories of Dave have deeply changed my perceptions of life. My brother left me a sacred gift: the insight to look beyond my own fears and the courage to pursue my dreams and aspirations that would have, perhaps, been overlooked....

"I have decided to call this campaign the David Sawchuk Ride for Camp Trillium because in many ways, he encouraged me to become involved with Camp Trillium.

"In May 1998, I will be leaving for McMaster University on my mountain bike, and riding to Camp Trillium,

Rainbow Lake, which is located in Waterford, Ontario. From there, I will commence a 5,000-kilometre ride across Canada to the University of British Columbia."

I know that all members would want to wish Don Sawchuk success in his campaign to raise money for Camp Trillium on behalf of his younger brother Dave.

POLICE SERVICES

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): This week I had the pleasure of hosting a breakfast to express appreciation to the hardworking members of police divisions 22 and 23 in Etobicoke.

The men and women of these two divisions answer many calls from my constituents. I have a great deal of confidence in these police officers for their ability to respond effectively, and I know the people in my riding share that view.

Also joining me to express his gratitude was our province's Attorney General, Charles Harnick. The minister and I listened carefully to the feedback from those in attendance and shared what our government is doing to promote safety in Ontario's communities. This includes additional money made available in our recent budget for the community policing partnership program. It will result in the hiring of up to 1,000 new front-line police officers in order to increase police visibility and presence and help target high-crime areas in neighbourhoods where they are most needed.

The provincial government views justice and community safety as a strong priority. We will continue to do our part and hope the federal government will also demonstrate responsibility by addressing any necessary changes at its level, for a most effective justice system.

I look forward to maintaining a positive relationship with the police in Etobicoke and look forward to continuing to hear their views on making communities safer across Ontario.

There were approximately 50 policemen and police-women there.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on administration of justice and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 6, An Act to amend the law with respect to Partnerships / Projet de loi 6, Loi visant à modifier des lois en ce qui concerne les sociétés en nom collectif.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ROSS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL ACT, 1998

Mr Stewart moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr14, An Act respecting the Ross Memorial Hospital.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

SAFE SCHOOLS ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES ÉCOLES

Mr Newman moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 21, An Act to promote Safety in Ontario Schools and create positive Learning Environments for Ontario Students by making amendments to the Education Act /
Projet de loi 21, Loi visant à promouvoir la sécurité dans les écoles de l'Ontario et à créer des milieux d'apprentissage favorables pour les élèves ontariens en apportant des modifications à la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A short comment?

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): Ensuring safety in Ontario schools is an important objective for all Ontarians. This bill provides principals, boards and police with better tools than they have today to deal with at-risk students and make Ontario schools safer places to study and work. It provides much-needed provincial standards while ensuring that communities have the flexibility they need to design local programs that best meet their needs.

The Safe Schools Act, if passed, will be an effective tool for reducing violence in Ontario schools, because it was developed with the input of people who will use it in Ontario schools.

I look forward to the support of all members of this Legislature on both sides of the House for this important piece of legislation.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GAMING REVENUE

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier, and it has to do with slot machines and how you plan to spend the revenue from slot machines. We've been told that what you plan to do with all of the provincial government's revenue from slot machines, if it's \$200 million, if it's \$500 million, if it's

\$1 billion — by the way, you're estimating \$500 million — is to spend it incrementally on health care. In other words, the quality of our health care in Ontario will now depend on how much revenue we get from slot machines.

My question is this: Can you explain to Ontario why we should be relying on slot machine revenues to determine the level of health care in the province?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): One of the reasons we are turning to an alternative source of revenue is because the Liberals in Ottawa cut us \$2 billion and we're looking for every opportunity we can get to replace the Liberal cuts with money wherever it will come. So I can assure you that we will fund health care appropriately, we will deliver services appropriately, we will continue to expand health care, we will continue to increase the funding, and yes, we will look for new sources of revenue, given the over \$2 billion in Liberal cuts. That's why.

Mr Phillips: I'd like to pursue the Premier a little more on this. You have indicated that you plan for the taxpayers of Ontario to lose about \$1 billion in slot machines. You plan to take about \$500 million of that revenue from slot machines, and what you have said to the people of Ontario is that whatever revenue you get from slot machines, you will spend on health care. So if it's \$200 million, you'll spend it on health care, if it's \$500 million, if it's \$1 billion. In other words, without any question, the level of care in health in the province is now dependent on how much revenue Ontario loses in slot machines. To me it is absurd that you are going to determine the level of health care based on the amount of revenue from slot machines.

My question is very simple. You have approved this. What sorts of incremental health spending, what things do you expect to buy with the slot machine revenue for health care in the province? What specifically will you do with the money from slot machines that you wouldn't do if you didn't have the money from slot machines?

Hon Mr Harris: First of all, we don't plan to take any more money from Ontarians in gambling than has already been taken. We plan to divert, though, that money away from organized crime and into health care. We plan to divert some of that money away from organized crime and we plan to divert some of that money away from inefficiencies in the system that you left us, which was these roving casinos that were all over the place and very difficult to police. We plan to divert some of that money into charities. Perhaps we'll use some of the new money to do the right thing by the hepatitis C victims that the Liberals won't do either.

Mr Phillips: I want to continue on this issue, Premier. You have indicated that you will spend the money you raise from slot machines in addition to any other money you're spending on health care. In other words, if you don't get any money from slot machines, then health care spending will be lower. If you get money from slot machines, it will be higher to whatever extent you raise money. You said you were going to get \$500 million from health care. I say again, without any question of a doubt now you have determined that the quality of health care in

Ontario will be determined importantly by how much money we raise from slot machines.

I want a clear answer. You have said it will be incremental. Will you give us one specific example of what incremental money you will spend on health care as a result of raising \$500 million from slot machines? Without a question of a doubt now, quality of health care in Ontario will be determined by how much money you get from slot machines.

Hon Mr Harris: What I can tell you is this: Not a penny of the roving casino money went into health care, and we plan to put some of the gambling money into health care, money that was going illegally, in the case of the charitable casinos, into organized crime and into inefficiencies. Some of the money clearly will go into charities and into community services.

I can assure you of this: In spite of the fact Liberals improperly funded the health care system, in spite of the fact that they mismanaged the health care system, in spite of the fact that it was their inaction over five years of wanton spending that led to a large part of the problem we are correcting today, and in spite of the fact that Liberals in Ottawa continue to slash and cut health care funding, we will continue because it's our number one priority to do the right thing.

TUITION FEES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is also for the Premier. We know that you are forcing students into more and more debt, but you are also taking more and more out of the pockets of parents who want their sons or daughters to have the chance to go to college or university.

Three months ago your Minister of Education announced that parents will be expected to contribute more to the cost of a child's education. You want to force another year of contribution on them. I want to give you an example of what this means to a family where both parents are working and have a combined total net income of about \$60,000, a pretty typical middle-income family.

You expect those parents to contribute \$8,000 a year to the cost of their child's education before you will even consider giving them any financial assistance. Now, if their child wants to go on to graduate work or to law or to medicine, you're going to force those parents to pay another \$8,000 for an extra year's contribution. For the record, Premier, that \$8,000 extra is six times the tax cut you gave to that particular family. Premier, do you think it's okay to take \$40,000 out of the pockets of that family?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the Minister of Education will —

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): What I think it's okay to do: It's okay to open up more opportunities for our students at post-secondary institutions, opportunities they've been denied in the past. I think it's okay to give more assistance to our post-secondary students through the opportunities trust fund, as we have been doing, through a \$600-million investment by

this government into the post-secondary education system, by giving \$29 million for certain universities which have increased access. I think those are okay things.

What I think isn't okay is that the federal government has reduced health and education transfers to the provincial government by over \$2 billion. That's what I think is not okay.

1400

Mrs McLeod: The \$40,000 that this government wants that middle-class family to contribute before they will lend the student anything is just the beginning. I'm sorry the Premier didn't choose to answer, because I wanted to extend my example.

Suppose that our student from that middle-class family is living in North Bay, for example, and wants to take a law degree at Queen's University. Nipissing doesn't offer law. The cost of a seven-year degree when you have to live away from home is at least \$70,000. Queen's University now wants to charge the law student another \$5,000 in extra tuition fees. So that North Bay student who wants to get a law degree from Queen's is now looking at more than \$75,000 in costs. You already expect the parents to contribute \$40,000. My question is, do you want the student to go into debt for the rest of the \$75,000, or go back to the parents for more money on top of the \$40,000 they've already spent?

Hon David Johnson: What we have to realize right off the bat is that the majority of university students do not need a loan in any given year, that the majority have no debt whatsoever.

The member opposite was on a government which allocated about \$200 million to support direct assistance to post-secondary students. This government has felt that isn't enough. We have more than doubled that amount to over \$500 million — \$530 million this year to help post-secondary students.

We've also instituted the Ontario trust fund to help students and we've broadened the opportunity so that fewer students will be rejected from the course of their choice. As a matter of fact, there will be 17,000 new positions in high-demand areas. I think that is a voice for quality and excellence and opportunity.

Mrs McLeod: If the student doesn't need a loan, it's for one reason only, and that's because the parents have to pay the full \$75,000 to put that student from North Bay through law school at Queen's. This government has just socked them with an additional \$13,000, which must be about 10 times the tax cut they offered that middle-class family.

There are some pretty clear bottom lines here. Bottom line number one: Either the parents pay the \$75,000 for the law degree at Queen's or the student goes into debt. You say the students will get all the assistance they need, and they can, but it is all debt. It is debt to you, it is debt to the banks, it is debt now to the universities. You say students will find the ways and means, but I tell you, Minister, when the ways and means mean more and more debt, students will say they can't afford it.

The bottom line for students whose parents just can't afford to pay the whole cost or indeed to pay any more is pretty clear: They won't be able to go to school, they won't be able to continue on into graduate work and that student from North Bay will not be able to get a law degree from Queen's. Do you and your Premier think this is fair?

Hon David Johnson: I don't know how the member for Fort William expects programs to be paid for. The reality is obviously that the student pays for it, the parent pays for it or the taxpayer pays for it. The reality is that all three of the above pay in some proportion for the cost of post-secondary education.

When the member was in government between 1985 and 1990, they allowed post-secondary tuition fees at universities to rise by 35% and got absolutely nothing for it. We are demanding of our post-secondary institutions a quality program, a program to enhance the quality of our post-secondary institutions. We are demanding that they set aside 30% if they choose to increase tuition — some won't, some will — but if they do choose to increase tuition fees, that 30% be set aside to assist our students. We have implemented a quality program guaranteeing accessibility and more opportunity.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is also for the Minister of Education. Students all across Ontario at the community college, high school and university levels are worried about your tuition tax hikes. They don't know how they're going to be able to afford to go to school.

Yesterday you told some people in the media that if people needed more information about how they were going to afford an education and how they were going to pay for it, they should call your Ministry of Education general inquiry lines. So I did that this morning. I called your first inquiry line — 325-2529 — and I got government voice mail. Then I tried your 1-800 line that you list for student inquiries — no answer at first, and later I got Dominion Securities, where a very nice woman said, "I'm sorry, I don't know why they gave you this number." Then I tried the first public inquiries officer, who said, "We are not here to sort out the public's financial situation and I don't know how you're supposed to pay for your education." Minister, why don't you just tell the students you don't have an answer for them?

Hon David Johnson: Unlike the previous government, represented by the leader of the third party, which allowed tuition fees to rise by 50% — I don't know where the leader was at that point in time, what the students get for a 50% increase — we are ensuring, if any students suffer an increase in tuition, if any post-secondary institutions put the tuition up, that 30% of that go in terms of assisting students who need assistance. We're also ensuring more opportunities for our students.

There are a number of ways this will be paid for: through the trust fund, through the 30% set-aside, through the extra \$600 million this government is pouring into post-secondary institutions.

If the member wants to take that back to any students who are enquiring, I would be more than happy to speak to them as well.

Mr Hampton: Minister, that's exactly the problem. You stand up here and you give your smug answers, and anyone who takes a second to think about them knows they are completely phoney and completely false.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Durham East, you're not in your seat. Please go to your seat if you're going to — you can't heckle anyway, but go to your seat regardless. Member for Etobicoke-Humber, please come to order. Thank you. Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: The reality is that you have already increased tuition fees by 60% over the last three years, and now, this year, on top of that you want to pass on a further 100% increase. It's very clear that young people who happen to have parents who are well off will be able to afford this, but modest-income families and middle-income families simply can't take on the risk. They can't take on these new tax hikes. They can't do it. When they call your 1-800 lines and they call your telephone lines at the Ministry of Education, as you told them to do, they don't get any answers there either.

Minister, what are middle- and modest-income families going to do? How are they going to afford these \$5,000-a-year tax hikes that you've put on them?

Hon David Johnson: First, the member knows, and he's absolutely incorrect as usual, that the tuition fees have not risen by 60% in the last three years. There is the fact that under his government they did rise by 50%, but tuition fees have not risen and he knows that. I guess he likes to spread that information, however incorrect. I guess that suits his purpose.

Second, unlike the previous government, which did nothing but permit institutions to raise tuition fees and got absolutely nothing for it —

Hon Mr Harris: No quality.

Hon David Johnson: No quality — we've implemented a quality program. No further assistance to students? We have almost doubled the amount of assistance through direct grants at the highest point of the NDP government, over \$200 million more assistance to our students than ever under an NDP government, plus the opportunities trust fund, and the 30% set-aside. We have done much more for students in Ontario than the previous government ever did.

The Speaker: Final supplementary. Member for Windsor-Riverside.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): Minister, we weren't able to get any answers on the telephone and we're having a hard time getting answers here, but we're going to give you another chance.

Last week in the budget you talked about a \$9-billion Canada-Ontario fund for student assistance, one of those promises that's going to take over 10 years to deliver on. In that it included \$400 million that already exists in student assistance funding. Earlier this week, and we

heard earlier today, you were bragging about over \$500 million in student assistance. Your office couldn't explain what looks to be a 25% cut in student assistance. We tried on the phone; we couldn't get an answer.

Minister, why are you trying to disguise a major cut in student assistance under the cover of a 10-year commitment to spend federal money? Please explain that to us.

Hon David Johnson: The member opposite, in line with his leader, is conveying information which is totally incorrect. My suspicion is that what you are referring is the fact that in the \$9-billion Canada-Ontario millennium fund, which we are proud to be associated with, which will include more money for more students in Ontario who need support, we have not included the default money, which is extra and over and beyond that again, so there will be more money which, if there continue to be defaults, as they climbed under your regime — when you were in government more and more defaults every year, unfortunately.

We are giving more assistance to students through the opportunities trust fund, which will start this year, not 10 years from now but this year, more money through various means. But if there is still default, that again is over and above, beyond, and that's where you're missing the point.

1410

USER FEES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My next question is for the Premier. The Premier in the Common Sense Revolution says, "Under this plan, there will be no new user fees." I want to ask the Premier about user fees in the health care system, particularly Mrs Margaret Currie of Hamilton.

Mrs Currie's husband is blind and suffers from geriatric dementia. Mr Currie was moved from Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital, because there were not enough beds, to St Peter's chronic care hospital. Now Mrs Currie has to pay \$1,240 per month in copayment fees at the chronic care hospital and, on top of that, she has to pay \$1,100 per month for a private duty nurse to look after her husband because there are not enough nurses in that facility after your government's cuts.

Premier, how can you say that you haven't added new user fees to the health care system when you look at Mrs Currie's situation?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I would be happy to take the initial question, and if there are follow-ups the minister can take a look at them.

As we said in the Common Sense Revolution under the section to do with the Canada Health Act, "there will be no new user fees" contrary to the Canada Health Act. Any user fees that are in the system today, particularly in the area of long-term care —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Hon Mr Harris: Mr Speaker, this was a very significant commitment because, as you know, the New Democratic Party was against the Canada Health Act —

contrary to that — violating the Canada Health Act with the extra payments that you charged Ontarians who legitimately might have been out of the province for travel.

Given that the trend of the Ontario government had been contra the Canada Health Act, this was a very important commitment that we made, and it was a commitment made and a commitment kept.

Mr Hampton: We've just heard how the Premier says that \$1,100 in user fees for someone who is very sick is not somehow a user fee. We've just heard the Premier try to tell us that those aren't user fees. Premier, let me try again.

As of April 1, your government changed the fee schedule for doctors so that there is a user fee for a doctor to visit a sick elderly person in a home for the aged or in a nursing home more than once a month. Your government will pay if a doctor has to visit someone in a nursing home or a home for the aged for one visit a month, but if a doctor has to go back more than once a month there's a user fee. A sick person in a home for the aged or a nursing home, under your government, is only entitled to see a physician once a month.

Premier, what if there's a problem with medication? What if there's a change in the person's condition? What if the patient is dying? I guess then they have to pay a user fee under your government's new rules.

Hon Mr Harris: Absolutely not. There are absolutely no user fees over and above what your government had in any of the cases you've presented to me so far. There's absolutely no reason why 100% of all medical bills will not be paid for all medically necessary visits to any patient in a nursing home or in another home or to the doctor's office or to the hospital. There are some user fees in the system, the same ones you had in the system.

Mr Hampton: I'm sure the frail and elderly people across this province will be happy to hear from the Premier now that if a physician has to come in and see them, say, twice a month, three times a month, four times a month, there will be no user fee. I'm sure all the administrators and the people who work in those homes for the aged or in the nursing homes will be happy to hear that as well. We got that on the record.

Premier, the fact of the matter is that for people like Mrs Currie, who now has to pay \$1,100 a month for a private nurse because there aren't enough nurses in the chronic care hospital, and for elderly people in homes for the aged, you've added a lot of new user fees. Elderly people who need prescription medicine have to pay a new drug copayment fee, a new prescription copayment fee, and it's adding up to over \$300 a year in many cases. In addition, if someone needs acne treatment, they have to pay a user fee. If they want to visit an optometrist, they have to pay a user fee. Pregnant women who need an ultrasound have to pay a user fee. Premier, with all of these new user fees, copayment fees, administrative fees, why don't you just come out and admit it? You're slapping all of these new taxes on people who need health care.

Hon Mr Harris: I remember when the NDP hiked the user fees on ambulance services. I would say that when

somebody needs an ambulance, that would qualify as a medically necessary service. You saw absolutely no difficulty in increasing the user fees on ambulance services. You saw no difficulty in increasing the copayment for living expenses at the same time as maintaining 100% of the health care costs when you're dealing with the elderly, when you're dealing with homes for the aged and when you're dealing with nursing homes. In those areas we brought in absolutely no new user fees other than the ones that were in the system when you were there and were accepted then and have been accepted as legitimate non-health-care expenses, or those that the medical community have deemed not to be medically necessary.

Unlike, I might say, your government, now for the first time since 1991 or 1992, when you put us in contravention of the Canada Health Act, Ontario is no longer in contravention of the Canada Health Act, exactly as we committed in the Common Sense Revolution.

NURSING STAFF

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I also have a question for the Premier on health care. You met and heard directly, on March 4, from nurses in this province. They said to you directly, Premier, that the Harris health care system is a mess, that there's a crisis. They gave you a document called Putting Out the Health Care Fire, in your Ontario, Premier. You personally heard from them what was required, that nurses were stressed and angry, frustrated, devalued and leaving the profession. They asked you to put back \$325 million, to invest that directly into nursing, to show respect and to admit that you'd made mistakes that have worsened health care in this province. The nurses of this province came to you with that proposal and you've rejected them. Do you want to tell us why?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'm surprised that you continue to make stuff up. You were not at the meeting and I was at the meeting, so let me report to you what they said. They said, "Thank you for the meeting and thank you for your interest, thank you for your support of nurses. Here's what we think in addition that needs to be done." We agreed and we've done it.

Mr Kennedy: I've got the letter from nurses which I'll send across to you. If people are wondering why the health care they get doesn't conform to what they need, it's because this Premier can't understand what's going on with the health system. His remarks just proved that to us.

I'll quote someone else to you. Here's a nurse who called the Liberal health hotline: "Yes, I'm a nurse and I'm sick and tired of hearing how this government is putting money here, putting money there. We don't see anything like that happening in the hospitals. All we hear is they'll be slashing this, slashing that."

Your own minister talked about 4,000 unemployed nurses in this province. I talked to some today, and they're responding to the new Harris health ads — the ones from Connecticut, the ones advertising for nurses in London, England, the ones from California — because that's where nurses in this province have to go to get full-time employment. You've made them work part-time or not work at all

and you're going to privatize them in terms of home care. Premier, will you or will you not put money back into acute care hospitals dedicated to hiring qualified nurses in this province? Will you do that?

Hon Mr Harris: We had a real positive meeting, the minister and myself, with the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. I think they will confirm that. They made some suggestions. I think they've been astounded that for the first time in 12 years the government listened to them and took their advice into consideration. I might add that on the area of the recommendations, we are following through on that. But as far as the numbers the member quotes are concerned, the numbers are as accurate as most of the other information the member comes forward with. There's absolutely no truth to it.

1420

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Premier.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Come to order. Premier, can you come to order, please? Member for York South, come to order.

Ms Lankin: Premier, in the last few months I've been meeting with families and service providers in the area of children's mental health services. They've made me aware of some significant concerns that I hope to share with you today, and I hope to enlist your help in solving some problems.

Children's mental health centres come under the Ministry of Community and Social Services, but children's mental health beds in hospitals come under the Ministry of Health. Currently, it's not a priority for either ministry and there's no centre for planning and delivery of those services.

The recent Health Services Restructuring Commission report said that there needed to be a focus for mental health beds for children as part of a comprehensive delivery system, and they said that hospitals should work with children's mental health centres which have overall responsibility in the community for planning and delivery of children's mental health services.

That same week the child advocate report came out and said that 80% of children in the young offender system have mental health problems and they called on the system of children's mental health centres —

The Speaker: Question.

Ms Lankin: — to take a lead in planning delivery. They would like to do that but they've not been empowered to do so by your government. Premier, would you respond by indicating that you support them and their association taking —

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Let me say that I think the member is quite correct in identifying a coordinating or lack of coordination concern, and I think she quite appropriately is representing the concern we also have heard from those groups and from those advocates.

We are looking at their recommendation. I appreciate the member's interest.

I suggest that the Minister of Health would be prepared to include the member. We like working with all those who take a positive concern and care, and certainly you, on behalf of your party, have demonstrated that today. If you would like to work with us in making sure that we have a far better coordinated system, a more responsive system to deal particularly with children's mental health, we would like you to be part of that because we recognize there is some work to be done in that area.

Ms Lankin: Premier, I appreciate that. What I'm hoping for is that children's mental health centres and their provincial association would be recognized as a lead partner in planning and delivering those services.

Right now there's major restructuring going on in the hospital sector, as you know, and the Ministry of Health, and in Comsoc, through the report of Making Services Work for People. In all of those areas, they have to focus on priorities and on mandated services. Adult mental health is mandated by legislation; child welfare is mandated by legislation; young offender services are mandated by legislation. Children's mental health services aren't.

We need a focus and we need to be reassured, as there are growing service demands in all these other areas, which we recognize and we have to meet by legislation, that we don't lose services and don't lose sight of and see children's mental health services fall through the cracks.

The two things I would like to ask you to commit to are that we will not lose any level of current services, that at a minimum we won't lose those services for children's mental health out in our community, and second, would you give the minister responsible for children's issues the job of taking a look at and leading the process of giving us mandating legislation for children's mental health services in this province?

Hon Mr Harris: The member is quite correct. There are some silos that need to be broken down, interministerial silos as well as agency silos. On the suggestion of who takes the lead, there are some conflicting views, but we're not saying no to any of those. We think we do need to do that.

Secondly, the minister responsible for children is in fact doing exactly that and is taking a lead role in trying to assist both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. As well, as you say, there are others that are affected there.

If it takes legislation, we'll bring in legislation. I'm not saying no to that either. But it is the kind of thing I think we could work on cooperatively, in a non-partisan way. I would invite Margaret Marland in that coordinating role, and we would welcome your participation, and if there's anybody in the Liberal Party who wants to work cooperatively, they could too.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr Bob Wood (London South): My question is to the Attorney General. The changes to the Young Offenders

Act proposed by the federal government yesterday contain tougher treatment for some serious offenders but not for drug traffickers. This is a glaring omission. Apparently the federal Liberals do not fully understand the direct relationship between illegal drug use and crime.

I challenge their provincial cousins in this House to stand up and publicly tell the federal Liberals that they are wrong. Is the Attorney General prepared to ask the federal government to reopen their package and include tougher treatment for drug traffickers?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I appreciate the question from the member for London South. He's quite right that it's going to be very important to speak to the federal government and to tell them about some of the omissions in their package.

Part of the package that Ottawa delivered yesterday includes certain offences for mandatory adult sentencing. They include murder, attempted murder, aggravated sexual assault, manslaughter and youth with a pattern of serious violent offences. But when you look at that list, certainly there is nothing there dealing with weapons offences, where a crime is committed and there's use of a weapon or possession of a weapon. There's nothing there that deals with drug-related offences. There's nothing there that deals with issues of robbery or other kinds of assault.

While there are many things to recommend the federal recommendations, certainly these are glaring omissions. We will be, let me give the member my assurance, pressing this —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Bob Wood: There's a wide consensus among the public that we have to get tougher on serious young offenders. There has certainly been a deafening silence today from the Liberal benches on this issue.

Interjections.

Mr Bob Wood: We're beginning to hear something now.

Will the minister ask for the support of the other provinces, the police community and the other two parties in the Legislature in his efforts to get stronger federal legislation for serious young offenders?

Hon Mr Harnick: Certainly I will be asking for the support of all members of this House if they've been listening to the people in Ontario, who have felt over a long period of time that the Young Offenders Act is a failed experiment and now see this as an opportunity to have new legislation, to create a new act to deal with young offenders, to deal properly with the issues that have so long been affecting the safety of communities.

Certainly as we look at this package in terms of the way it deals with 14-, 15-, 16- and 17-year-olds, in some respects it really is a move in the right direction. But a lot more needs to be done. I know that certainly members of the Liberal Party have a great stake in listening to what people in Ontario are saying, and I hope they'll speak to their federal cousins and remind them of some of the

glaring errors in their package that was released yesterday.

1430

AIR QUALITY

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday the Ontario Medical Association held a session to inform us that Windsor is the most polluted area in the country and more people here are dying from heart failure and respiratory illness. That especially affects young children and seniors. That means more emergency visits and more hospitalization. That is the last thing, as you know, that Windsor hospitals need.

Minister, I'd like to know, how are you fighting for us with your colleague the Minister of the Environment, who not only has done nothing for our environmental air quality issues but in fact has made things worse since he has become the minister?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Mr Speaker, through you to the Minister of the Environment, who has been working hard.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I want to assure all members of this House that we are very concerned about protecting and improving the air quality for the people of Windsor and the rest of the province.

We have moved forward very aggressively on updating our air quality standards in this province. We have brought in a new particulate standard for Ontario for the first time. We are going to implement a vehicle emissions testing program, primarily and first in the greater Toronto area and the Hamilton-Wentworth area, but I have asked the municipal council of the city of Windsor, if they would like it at an earlier date than it is planned for in that area, to please write to me with a resolution and we will see that that comes to fruition.

Mrs Pupatello: I'm sorry the Minister of Health will not advocate for Windsor health care concerns, because she knows what kind of situation we're facing.

To the Minister of the Environment: You had the nerve today to send out a fax sheet on air quality accomplishments and you talk today about how aggressive you are? You have been a kitten in this area. Let me tell you about your record. You don't have accomplishments when it comes to air quality. What you've done is you've cut the budget in half. You've reduced the staff by a third. In the Windsor area, which has the worst air quality in Ontario and Canada, you dropped the number of air quality monitors, and the Environmental Commissioner reported two weeks ago that you don't do anything with the readings from the monitors that are left.

Every other Minister of the Environment has been really aggressive in fighting issues that we're facing. You have to come to the table and actually do something. The people of Windsor want to know, what action will you take to resolve our air quality issues?

Hon Mr Sterling: We are not shy about the accomplishments that we have made in this province with regard to air quality, but the member from Windsor well knows that 90% of the air quality problems with regard to the Windsor area are caused by the United States of America. I have invited her Liberal federal colleague to become involved. I have invited the Honourable Christine Stewart, the Minister of the Environment for Canada, and Herb Gray, the Deputy Prime Minister, who comes from Windsor, to go with me across to Michigan, to Ohio and to 10 other states where I have tried to carry the message that we are concerned with what they are doing in their states to our air quality here in Ontario.

Mr Speaker, you know that international relations are more within the federal jurisdiction than they are the provincial. Notwithstanding that, I'm doing my part, and on July 8 or 9, or in that time frame —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. New question.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Minister, you're no kitten; you're just a scaredy-cat. You're just too afraid of your big corporate friends to do anything about this. That's the reality.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock. Come to order. Member for Riverdale.

Ms Churley: We all know about the Ontario Medical Association's groundbreaking report yesterday linking smog directly to health problems and death. This is not an abstract issue; this is a health crisis. Yet your government's electricity reform could mean more smog and an even bigger assault on our health. Electricity competition will mean dirty Ohio coal invading our electricity market. But they won't be just sending over their power, they'll be sending us their smog.

Minister, your government's Hydro white paper made vague and general commitments to the environment. That is not good enough. Will you commit today that all generators selling electricity to Ontario will be bound by law to smog standards that are at least as tough as those that now apply to Hydro? Will you guarantee that today?

Hon Mr Sterling: The electricity restructuring legislation will come forward very soon, and I think the member opposite will be pleasantly surprised when she reads that legislation.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): Deaths from heart disease and respiratory problems are higher in the city of Windsor than any place else in the country. This is a health crisis that we can no longer ignore. The Minister of Health doesn't want to respond to our questions, so I'll direct this to the Minister of the Environment. We need more than vague assurances; we need more than voluntary compliance. We don't need delays, we need regulation and, more important, we need enforcement.

Even Donald Macdonald, your free market deregulation competition guru, says that deregulation of Ontario Hydro is not going to be good for the environment. That's going to mean more smog, more health problems and more

deaths, especially in the area I represent, because of dirty Ohio Valley coal-burning electricity plants. Your policies are going to open the door to dirty Ohio coal unless you act, and we want to know what steps you're going to take to ensure our health and our environment are not threatened.

Hon Mr Sterling: As I mentioned to the previous questioner, I think that people who are concerned about air quality and the problem with American generators of electricity will be very pleased.

Ms Churley: Meow, meow.

Interjections.

The Speaker: That's out of order. Come to order, please.

Hon Mr Sterling: Unfortunately I treat the air quality of the people of Windsor very seriously and not in a very, very humorous and silly fashion as the members opposite.

You will find in the electricity restructuring legislation the strictest controls on importers of electricity into this province as there are anywhere in North America.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is to the Minister of Health. There has been much discussion lately in a number of different sectors about the millennium bug computer problem, and I'm concerned about the possible impact this computer problem will have on our hospitals. A number of my constituents are reading reports and articles about how governments are unprepared and not properly addressing this problem, clearly referring to the feds.

Some of my constituents are concerned that local hospitals need assistance from the province to address this computer problem and ensure the continued delivery of quality patient care. Minister, could you please inform my constituents about what steps the government is taking to ensure that our local hospital will be prepared to handle this millennium computer problem?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): We are certainly aware of the concerns that the hospitals have. In order to address the concern of the year 2000 computer issue, we set aside in our budget this year \$300 million. That is before the medical renewal fund. We are working with the Ontario Hospital Association to ensure that we provide the appropriate support to the hospitals and that they can make sure they address this computer issue in the year 2000.

Mr Ouellette: I know your ministry is committed to ensuring that Ontarians receive quality patient care and treatment. Not long ago, your ministry approved an Oshawa General Hospital project to upgrade their existing laboratory services. Oshawa is a high-growth area with growing patient care needs and ministry attention to these types of service upgrades recognize the patient needs of our community and others like it. I understand that the medical renewal fund will serve many purposes in assisting hospitals such as Oshawa General Hospital.

Minister, could you identify some of the key purposes that this medical renewal fund will serve and what sort of feedback the minister has received about the creation of this fund?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Yes, again, we do know that there is a need for this medical renewal fund, the \$300 million that was set aside in the budget to ensure that we address the year 2000 issue. I will very shortly be announcing the details of the fund and how the fund is going to be made available to the health sector. In the interim, however, David MacKinnon, the president of the OHA, has indicated to us that patients in Ontario should feel very confident that we will be operating very successfully on January 1 of the year 2000 as a result of the investment that has been made by our government in the budget for the medical renewal fund.

1440

PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): My question is for the Premier. Tomorrow, word has it, you're going to be in Ear Falls. I must say that the community, the reeve, council and the company Avenor are certainly looking forward to your visit. But, Premier, you must realize that the community of Ear Falls has been without a doctor, a nurse or a clinic since last November.

In an article taken from the local newspaper, Miss Gloria Williamson, a member from the wellness committee, has stated that, "The Canadian prisons, with more than 400 inmates, are required to have medical services," while her entire community of over 1,000 residents, with a new industry being opened tomorrow, has no medical facilities.

After months of frustration with the Minister of Health and her ministry, the folks of Ear Falls will be looking for you to come with a solution to this problem for their community during your visit tomorrow. Premier, can they expect a solution to this problem?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Yes.

Mr Miclash: Thank you very much, Mr Premier. The residents are certainly looking forward to that solution. They've been working on this problem, as I say, since last November. They've been without medical services, without the service of a doctor or a clinic or whatever. Frustration is extremely high. The reeve himself, Reeve Desmarais, has indicated that, "The MOH asked us to present options, and we can't get anyone to look at our options." I have to say that they will certainly be looking for that solution tomorrow, one they've been looking for since November.

Hon Mr Harris: It's the first time the member has raised it with me. I'm sure he has raised it with others. It's not a new issue, as you know. It has been a problem in a number of northern communities particularly; in fact it was an election issue, as I recall, in every one of the elections I've run in in the last 17 years. I want to tell you that as a result of new initiatives that this government has taken over and above what the Liberals took, over and

above what the NDP took, we are getting more doctors in the north. We are constantly looking at new initiatives. I think just today Helen Johns, the member for Huron, has come up with another exciting new suggestion.

I thank the people from Ear Falls very much for the invitation. I'm looking forward to coming up, to the excitement, under the policies of our government, of Avenor's expansion and the new jobs, and the excitement that brings to the community. I believe we are close to a solution. I am happy to talk to —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, third party.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Kenora, come to order. York South.

Point of order, member for Kenora?

Mr Miclash: Did the Premier not say he was coming with a solution to Ear Falls tomorrow?

The Speaker: That's not a point of order.

New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Premier, I want to talk just a bit further about Ear Falls. I met with some of the representatives from Ear Falls and I know it was your government's change of policies that has resulted in the closure of the clinic there. The operation of the clinic under your government is tied to having a physician, and when the physician went under your government's policies, the whole clinic closed.

Premier, I think you owe it to the people of Ear Falls — since you're going to go there and try to take credit for the sawmill — and a lot of other people in northwestern Ontario who are having similar health care problems under your government, you owe it to tell the people now what the solution is you're going to announce tomorrow for the lack of a clinic, the lack of a physician, the lack of nurses in Ear Falls under your government. What's the answer?

Hon Mr Harris: I welcome you to the announcement tomorrow.

Mr Hampton: I want to ask the Premier something else about this. The reality in that part of Ontario is that just a 60-kilometre or 70-kilometre trip down the road we now have the longest-running gold mining labour dispute in the history of this province, again due to your government's policies. You put in place policies two and a half years ago that allow scabs to come on workplaces, and that has resulted in the longest-running labour dispute.

I can understand that you want to go take credit for a new sawmill, a sawmill the planning for which began in 1993 and 1994, before you ever became the government. I can understand that you want to go take credit for someone else's good work, but what are you going to do about the health care problem your government has created in Ear Falls and what are you going to do about the labour relations problems you've created in Balmertown?

Hon Mr Harris: I'm not going to take any credit. I'm going to represent the government of Ontario, at the invitation — made repeatedly, I might add, because it wasn't on my original itinerary — where they said, "We'd really like you to come, Premier, because quite frankly, in our

view, it is your policies that took it from a draft plan to actually investing the money and carrying on." But those are the companies that make the investment.

I think the people of Ear Falls deserve a lot of credit in some trying times. It has not been easy for the people of Ear Falls, for jobs, for the economy, in health care issues and in other areas.

As far as the labour dispute is concerned, if you think we should get involved and legislate and gut contracts the way you guys did with the social contract, we don't plan to interfere with the free collective —

Mr Hampton: Very shallow.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Leader of the third party, come to order.

1450

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the minister responsible for children. Last Tuesday we received some very good news about what this government is doing for children, and it was news that was very well received in my riding high atop majestic Hamilton Mountain. We heard how this government is helping working families through child care tax credits and working with business to strengthen child care supports for their employees. We also heard about funding increases to the children's aid societies and new funding to help provide the education our children need for the future.

Minister, I'd like to ask you about a particular program mentioned in the budget and that is the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program. Several weeks ago, I attended the launch of this program in Hamilton-Wentworth. I know the government initiated this program in order to help children and families get the best possible start in life. How does the government's investment today help benefit children and families down the line?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): I'm very glad to have an opportunity to answer this question because our government is extremely proud of our Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program.

Obviously, for the first time, when all newborn babies are going to be screened at birth for whether or not they will be at risk, this is going to be, in practice, the very area that every research points to, and that is early intervention and prevention. Healthy Babies, Healthy Children will make a very big difference to the future of children in this province.

Mr Pettit: As a father, in fact the father of two beautiful daughters, I understand how useful these additional supports can be for any family. New parents have many questions and sometimes need assistance in learning how to deal with the trials and tribulations of parenthood. Last week the Minister of Finance announced additional funding for Healthy Babies, Healthy Children. I understand that the government is doubling the current funding to \$20 million in 1998-99 and will increase it again to \$50 mil-

lion annually by 2000-01. How will this substantial investment change the program?

Hon Mrs Marland: The reason our government has decided to double the funding in this program from \$10 million to \$20 million in this year, and to make a commitment of \$50 million annually by the year 2000-01, is because all the people who are already involved with this program across this great province recognize that it is the solution. When we invest in meeting the needs of those children in their early years, we know that when they start school they will be ready to learn, will have the benefits of being ready to learn —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mrs Marland: — and the problems will not be complicated by the fact that they haven't had the interventions in those early years.

The interventions in the early years and the referral —

The Speaker: Point of order, member for Windsor-Sandwich.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to register, under standing order 37(a), my dissatisfaction with the answer from the Minister of the Environment and request a late show.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): File the appropriate papers.

PETITIONS

NURSES' BILL OF RIGHTS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas nursing is key to quality health care; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to provide high-quality care; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to be heard and consulted on health care issues; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to be recognized and treated as equals in the health care system; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to have meaningful participation in all aspects of health care reform; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to be advocates for their communities and the people they care for without fear of reprisal; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to work in settings that are free from harassment and discrimination and that nurture learning, diversity, personal growth, job satisfaction and mutual support; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to work in conditions that promote and foster professionalism and teamwork; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to deliver care in an integrated, publicly funded, not-for-profit health care

system that is grounded in the principles of the Canada Health Act;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour, promote and respect the nurses' bill of rights as outlined above and to ensure that these rights are enshrined in all aspects of health care."

I affix my signature to it.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have further petitions regarding the Workers' Health and Safety Centre signed by autoworkers, steelworkers, nurses and teachers —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Can you read the petition, please.

Mr Christopherson: — from all across the Hamilton region. It reads as follows:

"Whereas each year in Ontario approximately 300 workers are killed on the job, several thousand die of occupational diseases and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas during the past decade the Workers' Health and Safety Centre proved to be the most cost-effective WCB-funded prevention organization dedicated to worker health and safety concerns; and

"Whereas the WCB provides over 80% of its legislated prevention funding to several employer-controlled safety associations and less than 20% to the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre recently lost several million dollars in funding and course revenue due to government changes to legislated training requirements; and

"Whereas 30% of Workers' Health and Safety Centre staff were laid off due to these lost training funds; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre now faces an additional 25% cut to its 1998 budget, which will be used to augment new funding for employer safety associations in the health, education and services sector; and

"Whereas the WCB's 1998 planned baseline budget cuts for safety associations and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre will be disproportionately against the workers' centre and reduce its budget to less than 15% of the WCB prevention funding,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the WCB's proposed cuts and direct the WCB to increase the Workers' Health and Safety Centre's funding to at least 50% of the WCB's legislated prevention funding; and

"Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the WCB to significantly increase its legislated prevention funding in order to eliminate workplace illness, injury and death."

I add my name to those of these workers.

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, to Premier Mike Harris, Minister of Health Elizabeth Witmer and members of the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion three-year agreement with the Ontario Medical Association; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to improve patient access to chiropractic services on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes, because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

In my riding of Durham East chiropractic services were founded, so I'm pleased to support this.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition that is addressed to the assembly and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government wants to take an additional \$1 billion out of the education system this year and every year; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has decided to hire uncertified teachers in kindergarten, libraries, for guidance, physical education, the arts and technology; and

"Whereas the Ontario government wishes to remove the right to negotiate working conditions; and

"Whereas the Ontario government would remove at least 10,000 teachers from classrooms across the province; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has become the sole decision-maker on class size, preparation time and the length of the school day; and

"Whereas the Ontario government proposes to take decision-making powers out of the hands of locally elected community-minded trustees,

"We, the undersigned Ontario residents, strongly urge the government to repeal Bill 160 and create an accessible

public consultation process for students, parents, teachers and school board administrators to study alternative solutions that have universal appeal and will lead to an improved educational system."

I affix my signature to this document.

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STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I have a number of petitions signed by persons from New Liskeard, Matheson, Marathon, Toronto and Cobalt about the income-contingent repayment plans.

"The Mike Harris Conservatives are promising to have an income-contingent repayment plan in place for 1998-99. Supporters of income-contingent repayment plans claim that it provides a more flexible student aid program by tying a student's loan repayments to his or her income. The lower your income, the lower your payments. If your income drops below a certain threshold, no payments would be necessary. Repayment would continue for a set number of years, usually 25 to 30, after which the loan balance is forgiven. It sounds good, but there are many more factors involved with the ICRP which ultimately make it a bad choice for students.

"Under this, students will amass much greater debt loads than they do at present. Increases to the length of the repayment period, the lack of interest relief during periods of non-repayment and the end of loan forgiveness will all contribute to the greater accumulation of debt for many students. The problems of compounding interest and skyrocketing debt loads will be especially severe for students who face periods of unemployment and/or those with lower levels of income after graduation. For these students, statistically longer periods of unemployment and lower wages will result in much greater debt loads. In some cases, low-income students will either pay back many times more than other students or will be in debt for much of their lives.

"As if massive debt loads are not bad enough, ICRPs are also linked to higher tuition fees. The reason is that the scheme allows governments to download the responsibility for funding post-secondary education on to the backs of students. Tuition fees would be allowed to increase at a much more rapid pace because, as ICRP supporters claim, the additional debt burden will be offset by more flexible repayment options. The claim that students can absorb more debt as long as more flexible repayment options are available is false. As it is now, tuition fees and debt loads have caused many students to look at the cost of post-secondary education and decide that it is not an option they can afford. Even without massive tuition hikes, ICRPs mean longer repayment periods and greater debt for many students. With increases in tuition of the kind associated with ICRPs, we would be looking at a critical decline in the accessibility of Ontario's post-secondary institutions.

"ICRPs are not a solution to the problems haunting Ontario students. Currently more and more students in

Ontario are requiring loans to commence or continue their studies and the individual debt carried by these students is rapidly mounting. We need steps to lessen student indebtedness, including such things as an end to excessive tuition fees, a system of grants which provides funding to students in need and decent employment prospects. What we do not need is an ICRP that would only accelerate the current debt crisis facing post-secondary students."

HOME CARE

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): This petition is addressed to the Legislature of Ontario and reads as follows:

"Whereas sufficient new funds have not been allocated from the province to provide the quality and quantity of services offered by the community care access centre of Wellington-Dufferin, thereby resulting in a change to the eligibility criteria and a decision by the CCAC not to include homemaking services for the disabled, frail and elderly as an insured service and decreasing the amount of support and relief services available for relatives and others who provide care for an individual at home;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"Increase the funds allocated for health care in Wellington-Dufferin in order for the community care access centre to support individuals to remain in their own home by reinstating homemaking services to the disabled, frail and elderly, reinstating caregiver support in the form of respite services back to 60 hours per month, as provided by the former home care agency."

It's signed by over 300 constituents in the Wellington area.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have a petition from the Knox Presbyterian Church in my constituency who are extremely concerned. It reads like this:

"We, the members of Knox Presbyterian Church in Agincourt, hereby petition the government of Ontario to abandon its ill-advised scheme to license permanent charity gaming clubs and video lottery terminals across Ontario.

"Evidence from other constituencies indicates clearly that such casinos bring about a massive increase in community-based gambling with its attendant addiction, broken families, loss to the local leisure industry and increasing crime and social problems. The costs are too much.

"Most of the revenue is related to go not to charities but to operators and to the government. It is the worst kind of regressive taxation.

"We call on your government to respect the clearly expressed wishes of your constituents who have said a resounding no to these casinos with VLTs. We urge you to pursue a course that provides adequate resources for social programs without resorting to methods that increase

unhealthy behaviour and pursuit of illusionary dreams of wealth."

I affix my signature to this in full agreement.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly signed by over 100 people from southwestern Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas approximately 300 workers are killed on the job each year and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario continues to allow a massive erosion of WCB prevention funding; and

"Whereas Ontario workers are fearful that the government of Ontario, through its recent initiatives, is threatening to dismantle workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have consistently provided a meaningful role for labour within the health and safety prevention system; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have proven to be the most cost-effective prevention organizations funded by the WCB;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cease the assault on the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre remain labour-driven organizations with full and equitable WCB funding and that the WCB provide adequate prevention funding to eliminate workplace illness and injury."

I am proud to affix my signature.

REGULATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): I present to the assembly a petition signed by 19 of my constituents in the city of Guelph. It concerns their concern about the intentions of the Ontario College of Certified Social Workers.

They humbly and respectfully ask of the Legislative Assembly that any legislation must include the regulation of social service workers and their clients in order to realistically reflect services provided in our communities, and they request that graduates of social worker services programs are included in any proposed social act.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): A petition to the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas red light cameras can dramatically assist in reducing the number of injuries and deaths resulting from red light runners; and

"Whereas red light cameras only take pictures of licence plates, thus reducing privacy concerns; and

"Whereas all revenues from violations can be easily directed to a designated fund to improve safety at high-collision intersections; and

"Whereas there is a growing disregard for traffic laws, resulting in serious injury to pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and especially children and seniors; and

"Whereas the provincial government has endorsed the use of a similar camera system to collect tolls on the new 407 tollway; and

"Whereas mayors and concerned citizens across Ontario have been seeking permission to deploy these cameras due to limited police resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario support the installation of red light cameras at high-collision intersections to monitor and prosecute motorists who run red lights."

I affix my name to this petition.

1510

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SMALL BUSINESS AND CHARITIES PROTECTION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PETITES ENTREPRISES ET DES ORGANISMES DE BIENFAISANCE

Mr Baird, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 16, An Act to give Tax Relief to Small Businesses, Charities and Others and to make other amendments respecting the Financing of Local Government and Schools / *Projet de loi 16, Loi visant à alléger les impôts des petites entreprises, des organismes de bienfaisance et d'autres et à apporter d'autres modifications en ce qui a trait au financement des administrations locales et des écoles.*

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise to speak on Bill 16. I would like to indicate at the outset of my remarks that I will be splitting my time with the member for Scarborough East.

This government is committed to creating an environment where small businesses can grow, can thrive and can, most importantly, create jobs.

As the Minister of Finance announced last week in the budget, the Ontario economy created more than 265,000 net new private sector jobs between February 1997 and February 1998. This is the largest number of jobs created in a 12-month period in the history of the province of Ontario.

In the first quarter of this year the Ontario economy created jobs at a rate unequalled in the past 15 years. Last month another 22,500 men and women found new jobs in communities across the province of Ontario. In my home

region of Ottawa-Carleton we saw unemployment fall to a rate of 7.1%, which is indeed good news for those who have been looking for work for many months, and for many years in some cases.

In fact, just a few short years ago unemployment was well over 10%, even approaching 11%, and the local economy was doing very badly. We were taking 15,000 to 20,000 federal public service job cuts in the federal Liberal government in a difficult restructuring exercise. So that 7.1% unemployment rate is good news for those who have found work. We've got to rededicate ourselves, as public servants and legislators and those in government, to ensuring that we do what we can to create an economy to ensure that every person who wants to work can work. That is a real priority.

When you look at the local economy in my part of the province, I look at some of the headlines:

"Tech Boom Triggers New Development: Skyrocketing business permits show sector's impact.

"The local economy got more good news yesterday as Nepean announced an incredible 365% jump in the total value of building permits issued during the first quarter...." of this year.

"The commercial sector also boasted" —

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): Higher taxes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Member for Ottawa West.

Mr Baird: — "staggering improvement with a jump to \$8.9 million from last year's \$2.5 million...." That's indeed very good news.

"Everyone's bullish on Nepean," said Royal LePage vice-president Paul Hindo. 'It's very, very busy.'"

That is good news for the contractors and the construction industry, which had suffered very greatly over the last 10 years. That is good news for those people and their families, and we were pleased to see that.

I also look at the local newspaper, the Nepean Clarion, and an article last year by James Ness:

"Five Thousand Jobs Coming to City of Nepean: Nortel announces a \$250 million expansion."

That indeed is under way now, Mr Speaker, as you will be well aware. There are actually five cranes coming out of the Nortel campus on Carling Avenue in Nepean. That is indeed good news for the local economy, where the construction industry is doing very well.

The province is also doing its part to reduce taxes and red tape and regulation. We also want to reduce the above-average business education taxes. That was something that was contained in the provincial budget.

But helping small business is a real priority. As the Minister of Finance announced in the budget, Ontario was helping to support private sector job creation, particularly in small businesses, because last year small businesses created an estimated 82% of all new private sector jobs in Ontario.

To supplement this growth, we have introduced legislation to accelerate the final phase of the employer health tax exemption in order to deliver the exemption a full six months ahead of schedule. This means that 88% of On-

tario private sector employers will no longer have to pay this job-killing payroll tax. What an absolutely terrible thing to do: Small business creates a job and the first thing we do is whack them with a payroll tax. This is a small step in helping to make it as easy as possible for a small business to flourish in the province of Ontario.

We've also introduced legislation to cut Ontario's small business corporation tax rate in half to 4.75%. This is the lowest rate in Canada, and that tax reduction will be taking place over the next eight years. This tax cut will help more than 90,000 small businesses to continue to grow and prosper and create jobs, because we know that small business is the job creation engine that is driving the Ontario economy, and that is indeed good news.

You cannot just take it from this member. Look at a quote from Judith Andrew, the executive director of provincial policy at the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, who says: "Any time you relieve small business of a tax burden, of all the things that stand in their way of growing and prospering, then of course you're going to create jobs, and already that's happening. We've seen over 200,000 jobs created in the province in the last year. That's a very positive sign, and these measures should, additionally, help."

She goes on further to say, "Because Ontario is seeing growth and some other provinces are not seeing the growth, it has got to be something to do with the provincial policies, and obviously the tax cut is a big one." That is indeed good news for small business in Ontario.

The province, as announced in the budget, as I mentioned earlier, is doing its part to reduce above-average business education taxes. As announced in the budget, the government will introduce legislation to reduce commercial and industrial education taxes in municipalities where these tax rates are above the provincial average. Over eight years, provincial business education taxes will be cut by more than \$500 million from their current levels, starting with a \$64-million cut this year, 1998.

To guarantee adequate funding for education, grants to school boards will be increased to offset the impact of reduced education taxes. Lower property taxes will help make Ontario businesses more competitive, and that in turn means more jobs for the province of Ontario.

We have listened and we've consulted extensively with small business, with industry leaders, with commercial property owners, with tenants and charities. Bill 16, which we're debating this afternoon, the Small Business and Charities Protection Act, is a result of these extensive consultations. We learned a terrific amount in this place, in debates in the Ontario Legislature and in the standing committee on finance and economic affairs when we've debated property assessment reform over the last year and a half, and we're richer for that knowledge. Those public consultations form a lot of the basis for Bill 16.

In addition, there were representations from literally hundreds and thousands of Ontarians that we listened to in the preparation of Bill 16, letters, whether they be from Weston, from Alliston, from Waterloo, whether they be from a lawyer, whether they be from a county in eastern

Ontario. A good number of these letters and faxes we received have said, "This is an urgent memo for Mr. Eves." These people have said very loudly and very clearly that they want the government to act. We have listened, we have heard what they've said, we have learned and we have responded to those concerns. I think it's extremely important that the government listen to small business and understand their concerns. I am very pleased to see that many of the suggestions, thoughts and concerns we heard throughout these extensive consultations in recent months are reflected in Bill 16.

This bill will allow municipalities to protect small business from large property tax increases. In addition, it provides protection for charities, and this will become mandatory.

By introducing the Small Business and Charities Protection Act, the government is keeping its promise to limit property tax increases on small businesses to no more than 2.5% a year over the next three years. To ensure that all small businesses could be protected, the 2.5% limit would also apply to businesses that lease their premises, for example, in office buildings, shopping centres or in industrial malls. This means that where a municipality applies the 2.5% limit, no business property or tenant would see a tax increase of more than 2.5% over their 1997 taxes in 1998, in 1999 and in the year 2000 unless there are significant changes to a property, such as a new construction or renovation or a change in the vacancy of the premises.

To provide municipalities with additional means to protect local businesses, Bill 16 also includes a mechanism allowing municipalities to provide rebates of property tax increases. Municipalities would also be able to design rebate programs in ways that best meet their local needs.

An important part of this legislation responds to what we heard from charities across Ontario. Bill 149, which this House considered in the first session of this Parliament, the Fair Municipal Finance Act, permitted municipalities to provide property tax rebates of up to 40% for charities occupying business properties. Bill 16 would enhance that protection and make it mandatory for registered charities.

1520

Where municipalities apply the 2.5% limit, charities occupying business properties would benefit from this protection. Where municipalities choose not to apply the 2.5% limit, they must provide registered charities with rebates of at least 40% of their property taxes. In fact, municipalities have the option to rebate up to 100% of the property taxes paid by charities occupying business properties. Municipalities would be able to extend rebates to other similar charitable and non-profit organizations.

Municipalities will also have the flexibility to determine which organizations should receive this protection and the amount of the rebate. Even where municipalities choose to apply the 2.5% limit, Bill 16 would also permit them to provide rebates to charities and designated non-profit groups.

The province will share the costs of these rebates for business education tax purposes. I know there was a real concern among charities in Ontario. I myself had the occasion to meet with a number of charities that came in to make representations on behalf of the organizations they serve. I recall specifically meeting with Greg Joy, from the Ottawa Food Bank, who came in and made representations. I thought he made some excellent points. Again, the government listened and the government responded. We are seeing that in Bill 16.

Under Bill 16, owners of commercial, industrial and multi-residential properties will be protected by the 2.5% limit on property tax increases. The bill will also fulfil the government's commitment to ensure fair tax treatment of landlords with gross leases. Landlords in the commercial and industrial classes will be able to pass through the equivalent of the average business occupancy tax, the BOT, to their tenants with gross leases. Landlords with gross leases in business improvement areas will also be able to pass on a portion of BIA charges to each tenant.

This legislation will give municipalities additional power to implement tax reform in a fair and manageable way and to respond to local needs and local priorities. For example, the Fair Municipal Finance Act gives municipalities the power to set graduated tax rates for commercial properties. This allows lower-valued commercial properties to be taxed at lower rates.

Bill 16 would give municipalities the power to apply graduated tax rates to lower-valued industrial properties. Municipalities would be able to apply up to three bands of assessment within the industrial class and apply a different tax rate to each band. Local councils will also have the option to apply four new property classes. These new classes are office buildings, shopping centres, parking lots and vacant land and, finally, large industrial properties. Municipalities would be able to decide which, if any, of the new property classes would apply within their community.

The Fair Municipal Finance Act gave municipalities the power to phase in assessment-related tax changes over a period of up to eight years. The Small Business and Charities Protection Act will extend that power to allow municipalities to phase in all tax changes resulting from the implementation of the Ontario fair assessment system. The province would parallel all municipal phase-in decisions for provincial education tax purposes. As I noted earlier, Bill 16 offers municipalities additional means, in the form of rebates, to protect businesses from property tax increases. Municipalities that choose to offer rebates will be able to design a program to meet the needs of commercial and industrial properties in their communities.

To give local councils more time to implement these measures, the province will extend the return of assessment rolls until May 29. This legislation will also extend the deadline to appeal assessments to July 31, 1998. The province will be consulting with municipalities on the effects of the delay in the assessment roll on their cash flow needs. Bill 16 would allow the government, if necessary, to advance funds to school boards in lieu of the

second instalment of education taxes paid by municipalities to school boards. Municipalities would then reimburse the province at a later date.

As the Minister of Finance said last week in his budget speech, all across Ontario small business owners, entrepreneurs and private sector investors are creating jobs. Companies large and small are investing and they're expanding. Something is going on here in the province of Ontario that is simply not taking place in the rest of the country. The British Columbia economy isn't doing well. Many parts of Atlantic Canada still see very stagnant job growth. Something is going on here in Ontario that's not going on in the rest of the country.

To be fair, interest rates undoubtedly have an effect; the health of the American economy undoubtedly has an effect. But they are not having as good an effect in the other provinces as they are in Ontario. I think the provincial government's economic policies, their ability to set and meet deficit reduction targets and expenditure reduction, their ability to reduce personal income taxes, to allow hard-working taxpayers and families across the province to keep more of their own hard-earned tax dollars, are undoubtedly part of the economic success that the government of Ontario is seeing.

We're seeing the job growth in small business, as I mentioned earlier: 82%. That's very much the case in my constituency. Northern Telecom may be creating 5,000 new jobs. JDS Fitel may be creating hundreds and thousands of new jobs. Where we're seeing significant growth is in those smaller and medium-sized enterprises: reducing payroll taxes, reducing red tape, cutting Workers' Compensation Board premiums, designed to encourage the growth of the small business sector.

"Ontario's rising tax burden is cited by business as the province's number one job killer...."

"The link between higher taxes and employment is clear." That's not John Baird who said that. That's not Mike Harris who said that. That's Lyn McLeod in her Commitment to Jobs and Growth in April 1994. In fact, we are right. When we reduce personal income taxes, we find that we see consumers having more of their hard-earned dollars. What do they do with it? They take it to the small store at the end of the street, to the market downtown and invest it in their local communities. We see a resulting increase in jobs.

When the previous government increased taxes by a billion dollars in the early 1990s, many in opposition at that time, be it the official opposition today or the then third party, said that that measure would kill 100,000 jobs. While we hoped that we were wrong at that time, regretably the figures indicate that we were all too correct. Tens and tens of thousands of jobs left the province of Ontario.

It goes without saying that reducing taxes by a billion dollars will create more jobs, not in and of itself, but it will help deal head-on with consumer confidence, which was sagging and pulling the economy down. Consumer spending is up. The retail sales numbers are up. Many, many small contractors who build homes are now experi-

encing unprecedented demand in the last five or ten years. I know in my own community of Nepean, and in the southern part of Barrhaven and Longfields and Davidson Heights, we're seeing increased new home starts. That's good news for the construction industry. That's good news for all the other folks who earn their living in the real estate and appliance industries, whether it's Camco here in Ontario building appliances for those new homes. That's indeed good news.

But even more important is what we're seeing in Ontario. For a number of years we were seeing Ontario beginning to drag this county down. For many years Ontario had been the economic engine of Canada. We were a magnet for jobs, investment and opportunity. But for ten years we earned a different reputation, a very different reputation. We became known as a mismanaged debtor, overgoverned, overregulated and overtaxed. The Ontario economy, which had been the engine of the Canadian economy, began to pull Canada down.

We're seeing the exact opposite now. The Ontario economy is pulling Canada up, and that's indeed where we want to see it. We're seeing a terrific amount of support towards those job creation numbers come from the small business community. This legislation is designed to deal head-on with ensuring that we protect small businesses and recognize the important role they play not only in the economy but in job creation.

1530

This initiative, coupled with the plan to reduce the employer health tax and then eliminate it by July 1 for small businesses with a payroll of under \$400,000, will help. The budget initiative announced to help small business by reducing the corporate income tax for small business will help a terrific amount. The work of the Red Tape Commission will help reduce needless red tape and will provide another incentive to small business as will a climate of balance and stability in our labour relations. Cutting Workers' Compensation Board premiums will help.

Not one of these things is necessarily the answer to all the problems, but cumulatively they have the undeniable effect of assisting economic growth in the province, and that is good news for small businesses which are the job creators in the Canadian economy. I know that's the case in my constituency of Nepean and I'm sure it's the case in the great city of Gloucester.

The Small Business and Charities Protection Act is an important part of the government's plan to help create an environment where small business can thrive, where it can grow, where it can create jobs, and that's very important for the Ontario economy.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I appreciate the opportunity to add some comments to the very detailed arguments already put forward by my colleague from Nepean in defence of this important bill.

I think it is important, as the member just said a minute ago, but this bill has to be considered in the context of all the other changes that are taking place, in the context of the extraordinary growth that has resulted in the last three

years because of small business making the kind of investment in new physical plant, in new hires, in new and innovative technology. The net result is 341,000 net new, full-time, private sector jobs, an extraordinary increase in the workforce and in fact the greatest increase in jobs in the history of Ontario, to the point that more people are working in our province today than ever in our great history.

I think it has to be seen in the context of the budget brought forward just last Tuesday, a budget that's about more tax cuts for Ontarians to create even more jobs; helping small businesses even further to do what they do best, which is to create jobs and to create new prosperity; learning opportunities for young people. In an increasingly technologically driven world, it is critical that we equip our students with the tools to compete, not just for the jobs of today but for the jobs of 10, 20 years from now.

We're emphasizing work over welfare. It's easy to do in a context of dramatically increased employment. It's easier to measure the philosophy that it's better for people who are currently on government assistance to have a job. There is more dignity. There is more self-respect. There is a greater chance for personal advancement when you're fending for yourself, when you're fending for your family.

The bottom line is that there too we have seen incredible change since June 1995 when we were elected. Fully one quarter of a million people have come off welfare rolls since then. Think about that: one quarter of a million people. That's half the population of an area like the region of Durham, and that's the difference in three short years. And it hasn't stopped. Just last month over 8,000 more people found new opportunities, found new hope by getting off government assistance.

We've got increased funding for health care, because obviously at the same time as the province is keenly grateful for all those who have made the investments in new jobs, it's important to us, particularly to the PCs, as the party that created the social safety net in this province, that it continue to expand. We're putting an extra \$300 million into health care, taking us absolutely, truly to the highest spending level in the history of this great province.

We're also putting in additional funding for classroom education. Much has been talked about this already this year but it bears repeating. We were elected with a campaign commitment to take hundreds of millions of dollars out of the waste and duplication at the administrative level of school boards and reinvest them where they will do the most good, in the classroom, with more teachers, more equipment, newer textbooks, smaller class sizes. That is what we were elected to do; that is what the people of Ontario read in the Common Sense Revolution. It's another promise kept.

Finally, there were a number of budget measures that outlined increased safety in our community. We've already seen some of the tangible expression of that, details of up to 1,000 new police officers who will be hired to ensure that the people who are working and contributing to our society will feel safe in their communities, safer than they have these last few years.

But let's get into the details of Bill 16 again. The member for Nepean outlined a number of the points. I'd like to expand on a few of them, if I may, in the limited time we have here this afternoon. The government is committed to creating an environment where small businesses can grow, can thrive, can create even more jobs. We've heard and responded to a number of concerns that small businesses and charities had that they were facing large property tax increases.

At this point it bears making the observation that historically the role of the provincial government in the area of property tax is that we do the assessment. The province has overseen the actual process of determining the value of properties. The next step was exclusively the purview of the municipal governments. Municipal governments are the ones that decide how much of the revenue they need to deliver their services will come from each of the various property tax classes. They will decide how much they think is a fair distribution between industrial, commercial, retail and residential.

The fact is, municipalities all across Ontario have taken widely divergent approaches to that raising of money. In Oshawa, you will find an industrial tax rate that's much, much lower than the one set here in the city of Toronto. On the other hand, the city of Toronto has a residential rate that's among the lowest in all of Ontario. Clearly, there are outcomes that will be determined by that decision made by a council. Oshawa has kept and expanded its industrial base. Toronto has driven industry into bankruptcy or out of the city. Thousands and thousands of jobs in the former city of Scarborough used to be located in what was called the Golden Mile industrial area, centred on a major GM van plant. They're almost all gone.

The city fathers, particularly the ones from downtown Toronto, would suggest that there isn't cause and effect, but while GM is still building vans, the wire and cable companies that were located there are still producing wire for our homes, cable TV wire and the like, Alcan is still making aluminum foil, still making other aluminum products, the difference is simply that none of those factories are making those products in Scarborough; they're making them out in the 905 area or even further outside the GTA, but they're still making those products.

I think you can very well make an argument that the decisions made by the city councils are exclusively responsible for the dislocation of factories and, to a lesser extent, for the dislocation of people as well. If you cross the Rouge River — the other side of my riding of Scarborough East is of course Durham region, the city of Pickering — you will find, for a house that is the same square footage, sitting on the same-size lot, that you will pay, on average, almost \$1,000 less in property tax.

The irony of that is that the people in Pickering have the benefit of the same range of services; in fact, because the community itself is much newer, the services tend to be much more up-to-date, much more accessible and in many cases cheaper in terms of user fees. It does not follow that the level of property tax, even at the residential rate, is a determinant of the quality of services or the

range of services. Again, that's totally the decision of a city council.

As we approached the issue of how to fairly deal with the important issue of fairness, of equity, making sure we bring an end to this beggaring of businesses in Toronto and other parts of the province and creating the hole-in-the-doughnut effect, as it's called, we had to look at a system that would ensure that properties everywhere are dealt with on an equitable basis.

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That bill, as you're well aware, was passed last year, and it created current value assessment. As a result, the province reassessed 3.9 million properties, all the homes, the factories, the stores, all across Ontario. Here in the city of Toronto, in many cases that meant bringing up to date assessments that had not been revisited since the 1940s. Imagine that. At the same time other municipalities such as Scarborough were working on assessments that were barely 10 years old, the people in downtown Toronto were benefiting from property values that hadn't changed in 50 years. Imagine that. At the same time as the subway and all the other development in downtown Toronto had clearly disproportionately benefited the people who live in the centre core of what was Metro Toronto, now the city of Toronto, the reality is that it was the suburbs who were paying vastly higher amounts of property tax and yet, one could argue, had less access to many of the cultural and other services here in the city.

The same was true for businesses. Businesses in Scarborough, North York, Etobicoke and elsewhere were facing far higher property tax rates, yet getting the same or fewer services than downtown Toronto.

So we made a commitment. We recognize that when you come out with something like the current value assessment system, otherwise known as market value assessment, it's a teeter-totter. It does not raise one additional penny in new property tax in any community, but it levels the playing field. It ensures that each property of equal value is assessed an equal tax.

The bottom line is that many businesses in Toronto will now be brought up to date, but the flip side of that is that for every dollar that someone with an out-of-date assessment goes up, there must be another business or another factory or another home which goes down by an equal amount.

Again, the city makes no more money and the city can make the decisions about how to allocate on the basis of property classes where it needs that money. Unfortunately, small business then became the victim of perhaps the greatest fearmongering campaign I've ever seen in my almost three decades of being a student of politics in this province.

I think it's extraordinary the extent to which certain people in the city of Toronto administration decided it was appropriate to scare people who had put their complete life savings into their business, to scare people who had sweated and worked and toiled to build up some small business, some small factory into something on which they relied for their income and that hopefully, I'm sure in many cases, they would be leaving to their children to run

in years to come. They said that it was appropriate to average all the taxes so that the big office buildings in downtown Toronto would see huge savings, \$12.5 million in some cases. But obviously, at the same time those corner retail stores, the small variety store, the dry cleaning shop, the flower shop, would have to pick up that \$12.5 million and all the other reductions.

It was a travesty and it was absolutely uncalled-for, because from day one the province had assigned staff from our own Ministry of Finance to sit down at Toronto city hall to work with their finance branch to ensure that they knew all the options that had been presented under Bill 106 and Bill 149, to ensure that they knew the significance of being able to create new classes so you didn't have to average everybody into one class. In fact, the irony is that it was the municipality of Toronto and other municipalities that asked for that power to be put into the legislation last year. Having been given the powers that they themselves requested, they decided that politics was more important than dealing fairly and honestly with their taxpayers, with the people who paid the freight here in the city of Toronto, small business in particular.

As a result of that averaging into one, they came up with a number that would show that 79% of all the businesses in Toronto would have gone up by more than 100% in property tax. How irresponsible. How reprehensible. How utterly uncalled for. But they did that and they continued to play a political game.

I'm sure many people across the city noticed that it was remarkable that all of the public demonstrations, all of that supposedly local groundswell of discontent, occurred in the ridings represented by opposition members. I'm sure many people also noticed the fine hand of the Liberal Party and NDP in much of what was going on in the fear-mongering campaign that was terrorizing small business all across this great city.

It was bringing new investments to a standstill while people wrestled with whether or not they would even have the money to pay their property taxes. They had no qualms about joining in that campaign of fear and intimidation. They had no qualms of fomenting this kind of extraordinary unrest and discontent in their own ridings. And for what reason? Pure politics. That's not what we were elected to do in this chamber. It was to serve the best interests of the people in our riding, in our city and across the province. They should know better.

On March 26 the mayor of Toronto threw his hands up literally — I can remember the picture in the newspaper — and said: "We give up. We do not have a solution. We cannot solve this dilemma, even though you've given us all these new powers to create classes and subclasses, even though you've given us a phase-in period of up to eight years, even though there are the existing and the new tools available for the city to do what the city's been doing for every year there's been property tax." They said, "We can't do it," and they called on the province, quite frankly, to bail them out.

The reality is that since January 1 they had seen all the same computer models we had. They had seen all the

different combinations and permutations of how you could arrange the various property tax classes to minimize or almost completely avoid any extraordinary shifts in property tax up or down. Instead you could reflect to some extent on ability to pay, but more importantly on the true demand on services, because I don't think anyone would argue that there are different services that are called upon by a 50-storey office building in downtown Toronto than by a one- or two-storey small retail strip plaza.

Having said they had no solutions, remarkably, at 2 o'clock the very next afternoon, the Minister of Finance, in a small restaurant on the Danforth, laid out the plan. In fact, the plan went far beyond anything the city has ever done for its taxpayers in its history. Quite frankly, while its genesis was in the city, the irony from the perspective of the members opposite is that we're giving these same tools to any other community in Ontario that feels that as a result of catching up to the rest of the province and bringing in current value assessment, if there was going to be an extraordinary shift within any classification — not all of them, any one — they could selectively use the tools that are brought forward here in Bill 16 to ensure that fairness and equity were applied.

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I am extraordinarily proud of the work the Finance minister has done here because in the context from 1985 to 1995, the 10 years the Conservatives were not the government here at Queen's Park, Toronto taxpayers saw, on average, an 8% increase in their property taxes year after year after year. I don't recall the Liberal or NDP members getting upset at that. I don't recall them leading parades in the streets back then, even though obviously in that decade the result was that property taxes had almost doubled. Services didn't double, new facilities didn't double and the quality certainly can't be said to have doubled, but they were quite content with 8% a year.

We don't know of course at this stage how they'll vote on this bill, but the reality is that if Toronto opts into this plan, and the mayor has certainly indicated that is his intention, for the next three years — not one year, the traditional budgeting process for every municipality — every business, every factory and every apartment building of seven units or more in Toronto is guaranteed that its property taxes cannot go up by more than 2.5%. Many won't change at all and some will go down by 2.5% each year for three years. That's something that no one has ever seen in our lifetime in Toronto. Remember, the same rules still apply. For every dollar increase on one property, there has to be a dollar decrease somewhere else in the city.

With 2.5% contrasted against the 8%, you would think the members opposite would see that the people in their ridings, not just the Conservative-held ridings in Toronto, will be just as protected, will benefit just as much, will have the same peace of mind, the same sense of security as those in government ridings. Hopefully we won't see the sort of partisanship which marked that original fear-mongering campaign; we'll see a recognition that this truly does go far beyond anything the city government has ever given businesses.

I also have to remind you at this point that I'm very proud as well that under the Tenant Protection Act we made it law that when a municipality reduces the property tax on an apartment building, every tenant must be notified and that reduction will automatically flow through to every tenant. Again recognizing that for any building that goes up there's another building that will go down, recognizing the fact that historically they have paid too much tax, those tenants — not the landlord — will benefit. Every penny of reduction will go right to a reduction in their rent paid.

There were concerns brought forward that charities that might rent commercial properties across Toronto would be unfairly affected. As part of this fearmongering campaign we certainly heard from certain councillors and opposition members that it would drive charities out of business. This bill will enhance protection for charities as well, quite simply because they too will be protected by that 2.5% cap, and if a municipality does not opt in for the 2.5% deal, they must rebate registered charities 40% of the 1998 and subsequent years' property taxes.

Municipalities will also have the power to extend that rebate to other charitable and non-profit organizations, and we're going to share the cost of those rebates as they pertain to the business education tax. Of course, from the landlord's perspective, this is good news, not just for charities but for any business that's in there, because there is no doubt that as a tenant faces higher and higher costs, their ability to pay rent is reduced commensurately, the likelihood of their staying in business is reduced, and so to give this sort of cap, to give this sort of long-term protection, is something that will mean a positive step forward in the eyes of landlords and tenants alike.

From the municipality's point of view, this bill brings a number of new powers. We've talked about the ability to cap the tax rate at 2.5%, but it's far more important to look at their ability to create new property classes, to say that there are different demands on services based on the type of use. They can reflect that by creating property taxes which will now capture all shopping centres, for example, in one class. They won't be averaged in with the small retail unit, say, a strip plaza or a free-standing unit out on the street. Similarly, large office buildings can be captured in a class, industrial will be its own classification and on and on.

There will be graduated tax rates for industrial properties. Again, the municipality can reflect on the degree to which it wants to attract or keep industry of various sizes in its community, with the attendant benefits, of course, of all the jobs that industry brings, the value-added component to its work, and it can set different tax rates. It may very well say that, understanding there is a certain demand put on services by a building but a building twice as big does not have twice the demand, you could set a tax rate, say, that the first \$400,000 of assessed value is at a certain percent; the next \$400,000 would be at half that rate; and the next \$400,000 would have lower rates again.

It's a new power that the municipalities have not had before, to be able to tailor the face of their community to

ensure that the people not only pay fair taxes in their homes, but that they have a fighting chance to have a job to go to in their own community because they won't have taxed commercial and industrial businesses right out of existence. Surely, that is as important as or even more important than protecting the residential property tax.

We have extended the power to phase in tax changes. We have created new subclasses, that if one unit in a plaza becomes empty, it will pay a lower rate, obviously, because there are lessened demands on services. To give councils more time to implement these changes, the province is going to extend the return of the assessment roll until May 29 of this year. The legislation would also extend the deadline for businesses, charities and individuals to appeal their assessments up until July 31, 1998.

We're also consulting with the municipalities on how the delay in collecting the tax will impact on their cash flow. We recognize that municipalities often budget fairly close to the bone and they would otherwise face difficulties in having a delay in receiving their property tax rates. The good news is we have said that issues such as the payment of educational levies, which would normally flow through the city, we will front-end load and then collect once the municipality gets the tax. Similarly, the payments that they're required to make as a result of the transfer in services will be delayed until September, fully three months after they would likely have received all their property tax.

I think it's appropriate as well, when we're talking about what's happening for small businesses across Ontario, to again point out that the property tax cap in any municipality which opts into this program is not the only good news. The budget saw a reduction in the small business tax rate. It has dropped by half a point, from 9.5% to 9% this year, and over the next eight years will drop in half, to the lowest in all of Canada, at 4.75%.

Also in the budget, and this really does play as well into the property tax debate, we recognized, when we changed the funding mechanism for education, that there were municipalities where the existing school boards, when they had taxation powers, had raised their business education tax rates far higher than the average of municipalities all across Ontario. It did not translate into higher-quality education; it did not translate into higher marks. It certainly translated into Taj Mahal headquarters for the school boards. It translated, in the case of the city of Toronto, into 90 superintendents, when they themselves have said there are only eight businesses, there are only eight functions that school boards oversee — but we've got 90 people, each at the top of their own pyramid. That's where the business education tax excesses went, not into modern textbooks, not into more science equipment or athletic equipment or more music programs in the schools in the city of Toronto; it went into more duplication and waste at the administrative level.

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In those municipalities which were charging above-average business education tax rates, the total amount of the excess was about \$500 million, just slightly over half a

billion dollars. The reality is that we understand that there is no fairness, there is no legitimate reason why the school boards did what they did and now what the municipalities have had to pick up with the new format for collecting business education taxes and remitting them to the school boards. But we also understood that it would not be fair to take half a billion worth of excesses, worth of folly, in certain school boards and apply them to the taxpayers of all the responsible jurisdictions across the province of Ontario. They had no role in that half-billion-dollar folly. They had no say in the excesses that have built these Taj Mahal school board headquarters. They obviously don't have a role in bailing out the problems in those municipalities.

But the province recognizes, with the goal of fairness, that we will clean up the messes, and we've already announced how we're going to do that. Some months ago the Minister of Finance was quite definitive. He said that our goal is to bring all of those jurisdictions which currently overtax back down to the provincial average. We delivered on his commitment — a promise made, a promise kept — in the budget by saying that one eighth of that excess will be eliminated each year, starting with \$64 million in this year's budget. By the way, here in the city of Toronto, which was the biggest offender, there was a \$50-million reduction in the business education tax rate, a \$50-million reduction in the taxes paid by commercial and industrial properties here in the city of Toronto.

When you couple that with all the other changes we're seeing — an ongoing reduction in the welfare rolls, recognizing the municipalities pay 20% of every welfare dollar — it's a marvel to us that we haven't seen incredible surpluses in municipalities all across the province each year for the last three years.

In the 10 years that we were not in government, the cost of running the welfare system in Ontario went up by more than \$6 billion. Again, municipalities paid a 20% share of half of that. The reality is that part of their justification for higher property taxes year after year was, "We're paying more for welfare." That's what they said to us, the taxpayers.

Isn't it interesting that starting in June 1995, and almost every single month since, that reduction in welfare rolls hasn't translated into a press release by all those communities that now see a decrease in their cost of welfare and a report that they will be having a tax windfall for those same taxpayers who were assaulted when the other direction was the trend in welfare? We haven't seen the over \$120 million worth of municipal reductions translated into tax decreases in Ontario. I think that's something else the people in Ontario, and small businesses in particular, will be quite intrigued to ask their councillors as it becomes more and more obvious to people exactly what sort of games are being played here: that when costs go up, your taxes go up; but when costs go down, your taxes still go up.

I don't see more bus routes. I don't see more police officers on the street, not from the Toronto budget; there will be from ours, but not from the Toronto budget. I don't see

better roads. I don't see new rinks. I don't see new libraries. Those welfare dollars have gone somewhere, but they sure haven't gone into hard services that you can look at, that you can touch and feel and use.

When you take all of these things in concert, I think it's obvious to all small business in Ontario that we are committed to helping them in their goal of increasing the size of their business, making sure the investments they have made pay big dividends, make them proud to be operating a business in what was, and now is again, the greatest jurisdiction, I think, not just in Canada but probably the world, truly the most self-sufficient part of North America. It's a shame that we were beggared in those 10 lost years. It's a shame that businesses had lost hope.

Many people on the other side like to joke about my background in Canadian Tire. I'm very proud of the fact that, as a small business person myself, having 160 employees, we were part of that system out there. But under the previous government it had reached the point that one third of all the Canadian Tire stores in Ontario were losing money, losing money before the dealer had taken one penny of salary himself or herself.

They will talk about the fact that this was a worldwide recession, but isn't it interesting that that wasn't the same case in the stores in Alberta and Saskatchewan or even Prince Edward Island? The reality was, in the other provinces of Canada, their sales were still growing; their profits were maintained or growing. The same was true for all the other small businesses in general, but not here in Ontario.

While I'm sure it is something they don't exactly like to dwell on, the fact of the matter is there is a stark contrast when you look at the province today, when you look at all the new businesses which are opening, when I look out the office window and see five construction cranes just in that one block south of my ministry office.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Why don't you drive east of Cobourg?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, please. Order.

Interjections.

Mr Gilchrist: There wasn't one construction crane in downtown Toronto from 1992 until we were back in government. The fact of the matter is that at that level down to the retail level, investment had stopped.

Mr Gerretsen: Which is your ministry office?

The Acting Speaker: Order. Member for Kingston and The Islands, please.

Mr Gilchrist: We've heard earlier today in question period about mills in northern Ontario which made the decision to expand after we were elected. I can tell you that out in Scarborough, since we were elected, there has already been over 600,000 square feet of new retail built. There is another 600,000 square feet already approved by the planning department and actively being developed today.

I look at Cedarbrae Mall, which is just outside my riding, right on the boundary with Scarborough Centre, and that retail complex is being redeveloped. It had run

down to quite an embarrassing state, but a company has come in, bought it and redeveloped it. The net result in that one location will be almost 600 new jobs: 600 new jobs in one retail plaza alone. Similar developments are taking place all across Ontario; it's not unique to Toronto.

This bill guarantees that the province will make sure that small business is not taxed out of existence by the municipal council. It will guarantee that the 2.5% cap ensures they can plan their budgets, they can plan their investments, not for one year but for three years, and then knowing, because the finance minister has already intimated the surpluses that we expect and that the people of Ontario expect as a result of the belt-tightening and the reinvestments we've made, in just the next couple of years, once we're in a budgetary surplus situation — there's no reason to be concerned about the fourth year — we're going to maintain property tax stability for years and years to come.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I heard the member mention — somebody said “my ministry office.” I did not know, first of all, that the member for Scarborough East had been elevated to the cabinet. Perhaps I've missed this announcement and someone can help me out on the government side. Second, I thought they belonged to the taxpayers of Ontario, not the individual members.

But I was glad that he mentioned rent control, because most Conservative members have not wanted to mention that the Conservative government of Mike Harris has abolished rent control in this province. I'm glad the member brought this to our attention. It hasn't been implemented yet because they can't get their act together, they can't get the regulations together, so it has not been implemented, as it was supposed to be, on April Fool's Day, April 1 of this year.

I do thank the member. All of those students who have to move each year, for instance, and then go back to try to rent the next year will certainly notice that significant increase in terms of the rent, as will seniors who may have to move from one accommodation to another and others. I'm glad the member mentioned that the Conservative government of Mike Harris, though it didn't say this during the campaign, to my recollection, has abolished rent control.

I also want to thank him for mentioning the downloading that's taken place with all of the new additional responsibilities which have been placed — onerous responsibilities, I might add, financially — on municipalities. We can understand why they would express objections.

What the government has done is it's going to give some transition funds out there so that this year or next year, when the provincial government may be going to the polls, the impact won't be so great. But two years from now, when the municipal politicians have to go back to the polls, we will see the real impacts taking place. So I don't think the municipal politicians are whiners. I think they're very realistic.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I'm pleased to have an opportunity to respond to the member, although I think I spend entirely too much time every week responding to the member on the various political panels that we sit on jointly.

With respect to the bill, I have some concerns about the member's interpretation, first of all. Moving to put the caps on the increases of taxes to business is a very important move. It's one which the government didn't acknowledge a need for for a long time, including the member, because I had that debate with him on one of our panels, but I think it's important that that has happened.

I disagree that it is in some way simply to control these errant municipalities, the way in which you made it sound. It's important that the government acknowledge that one of the vagaries of market-value-based legislation — the CVA has got those elements — is what happened in Toronto, where you have the downtown core and the office buildings in the assessment period having been valued very low because of what had been happening in terms of an economic move out of the downtown core, and that meaning that other business classes had to pick up the slack for that overall class. Over a period of three years they're hoping, and we've already seen a change in the status of the downtown core, that this will correct itself. I think there is more that could be done to stabilize the situation, including creation of different classes, and that's something that we'll look to in the future.

My current concern, though, is that while I will applaud and support provisions that will give some sense of security to the small businesses particularly in my community that I've dealt with and their concerns about the bill as it was, I remain concerned about homeowners. Because of the way in which you have structured these amendments, it not just being assessment-related increases that you are capping for businesses, you are passing over some of the cost to the homeowners. I think that's unfair. I think you should provide the same protection for the homeowners of our community.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): It's one thing to have an opportunity to comment on a speech by the member for Nepean; it's another thing to have an opportunity to comment on a speech by the member for Scarborough East. But to be granted this opportunity to comment on the two of them together is wonderful, and I thank them for that. It's rather appropriate that the two of them should be seated at about the same strategic place in the assembly.

The member for Scarborough East talked about the flexibility that's put into Bill 16 to allow municipalities to have different classes of assessment, to allow for graduated assessments so that they can have the flexibility to control taxation to a certain extent in their municipality, which they should have. At the same time, it gives small business the opportunity to be comfortable with the fact that their taxes are not going to be able to go up any more than 2.5% a year.

Small business, as all of us know, is the backbone and the future of our economy. They are creating 82% of the

new jobs. I look at my municipality of Chatham-Kent and small business is flourishing.

When we talk, as the member for St Catharines did, about the issue of change in responsibility between municipalities and the provincial government, my municipality has done many things, as the city of Toronto has, to help itself. It's eliminated a lot of unnecessary local government structure, a lot of unnecessary local politicians and it has done some things to restructure government so that it can deliver more efficient services on behalf of the taxpayers it serves. That is the appropriate thing. That is consistent with our role, as a provincial government, of providing the best services at the best price to the taxpayers of Ontario.

Mr Gerretsen: The member for Scarborough East just absolutely amazes me. He antagonizes more than any other member in the House at any time. He talked about fearmongering by the councils and the opposition etc. I would like him to explain why, for example, the member for Scarborough West was involved in one of those rallies in which small business people were rallying against the tremendous increases in property taxation.

The mere fact that you've now had to bring forward a bill that will limit the increase to 2.5% indicates that the local politicians and the opposition were right. As a result of your downloading and as a result of this implementation of the market value system on a complete basis, small businesses were going to get extremely large tax increases in most municipalities. That's why you're putting this bill forward of a 2.5% increase, because small business was concerned that with everything else you're doing, their taxes were going to go up by an extremely large amount.

The other thing that I very quickly want to raise is something in an answer that Mr Eves gave yesterday in which he equated market value with current value assessment.

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): What did they say about that?

Mr Gerretsen: He said, or at least Al Leach said, "My party and I will never support the imposition of market value assessment in Metro Toronto." I would like him to explain. Since Mr Eves has said that market value and current value are the same, has Minister Leach now breached his promise to the people in his riding, saying that he would never support the imposition of market value assessment? Would you please answer that?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough East.

Mr Gilchrist: My thanks to the members for St Catharines, Beaches-Woodbine, Chatham-Kent, and Kingston and The Islands for their comments.

To the member for Beaches-Woodbine, we share the concerns as well. As I'm sure you are aware, last night there was a panel discussion on one of the local TV stations. Remarkably, there wasn't a single comment about concerns for commercial or industrial in the whole hour, but there was a fulsome discussion about the challenges the cities will face in dealing with residential taxpayers.

It is true that if a city opts into this deal, the cap is the cap, the 2.5% increase is all that a business can go up. If a municipality wants to raise its total budgetary expenses, it can only go to those categories it has not fixed with a cap. I'd remind the member that a municipality doesn't have to take an all-or-nothing approach. You could do just industrial or just commercial or just shopping centres, or you could do them all. The reality is that those categories you don't cap will be the ones to which the municipalities must turn if they want budgetary increases.

Isn't it ironic, though — and I'm sure the member would agree with me here — that for the first time, if it were to be the case here in the city of Toronto that they couldn't do it by applying it to factories, they couldn't do it by applying it to retail stores and — I think I can say that we've discussed and agreed on this — they couldn't do it to apartment buildings because they've already done it too much to apartment buildings and to the tenants therein, the only people they could turn to now would be the actual people they look to for votes. They won't be able to hide it in the rent paid by a tenant and they won't be able to bury it in the cost of doing business. This is accountability. This is honesty. I hope the council reflects on that before they pass their budget.

1620

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to continue the debate on Bill 16. I want to start by reminding the public of something I think they already appreciate, that this thing has been messed up from the beginning. This is now the fourth major bill around this one issue, all within a year. We started a year ago on something called Bill 106. The government then was forced to bring in Bill 149 to amend Bill 106. Then they brought in Bill 164, and now Bill 16.

The reason I raise that is that if the government members are wondering why there was confusion and anger and anxiety out there, there's no one to blame but the government. The government simply has bungled this. I do not use my own language here. Let me use some language that the clerks and treasurers of Ontario used. They are the senior municipal civil servants. These are the senior people who are involved in our municipalities. They warned us about how badly mismanaged this process is. As I say, this is the fourth major bill now.

The clerks and treasurers said — they were commenting on Bill 164 — "Surely this illustrates better than anything that this government in its haste is making legislation by the seat of its pants without proper thought or planning. Yesterday's bill is amended by today's which will likely be amended by tomorrow's." They were right; we have another bill to amend it. "No wonder the municipal clerks and treasurers are confused. No wonder they say they are facing an administrative nightmare."

The member for Scarborough East was blaming the municipal politicians for the confusion and anger. It truly has been mismanaged from the start. I might say that many of the issues being dealt with in today's Bill 16 were raised a year ago by those of us in the opposition. We

raised the issue of the gross lease, that this was simply not thought about properly. We raised this issue, by the way. I would say to small business in Ontario: Beware. What the series of bills does is to eliminate something called the business occupancy tax, BOT.

What Bill 16 specifically does is to legalize landlords, even in what's called gross lease situations, passing on tax increases to their tenants. Those tax increases will be the average for the BOT for that municipality. The reason that's important is that banks right now pay BOT, business occupancy tax, at the rate of 75% of realty taxes. I'm generalizing. Small business pay at the rate of 30%. Now business occupancy tax is gone. What Bill 16 says is that landlords now will be allowed to pass on to their tenants the average BOT for that community. The BOT is 30% for small business, 75% for banks. You average it and it will be higher for small business and, obviously, lower for banks. The bill legalizes the passing on of that.

The landlords are caught here because the municipalities have to send them a tax bill that has the BOT averaged on it now, and the realty taxes. Landlords in a gross lease situation were going to be bankrupted. This was raised a year ago with the Minister of Finance. We said, "Listen, what are they going to do about gross leases?" He said, "Oh well, over time they'll be renegotiated." They were warned a year ago about this. I say to the members of the Legislature, this is not a pro-small-business bill, this is an anti-small-business bill.

We've talked a lot about the 2.5% cap. My understanding is there'll be relatively few municipalities across the province that will utilize that provision. Certainly the city of Toronto will utilize it.

The member for Scarborough East was accusing the municipal politicians of fearmongering and — he used some very extreme language — of causing anxiety, implying that the municipal politicians were fearmongering. I think he used the term "fearmongering." I would say to him, I don't think Mayor Lastman was fearmongering. He was expressing a legitimate concern about what was going to happen to small business. In the city of Toronto, bank towers were going to see their taxes drop by \$5 million to \$7 million per tower, and that was all going to be picked up by small business. We have in this bill a provision to allow three years at a 2.5% increase, and that is not as a result of fearmongering; that is as a result of small business legitimately being dramatically and negatively impacted by this property tax bill.

I say again what we have said in the debate on this from the beginning. We started the debate on Bill 106, and we said: "Will you please give us what we call impact studies? Will you tell the people of Ontario what these tax changes are going to mean?" As a matter of fact, some members may recall we had a debate here in the Legislature about releasing those studies a year ago so we and the taxpayers would know what the impact would be, but the government stonewalled; the government refused to release any study. When the municipalities began to deal with this issue, that was finally when people began to realize the impact of the property tax changes.

I say to the government, you are right that people were fearful, but they were fearful for legitimate reasons, and you could have avoided it. It was wrong not to let the public know what the impact would be. Sure enough, when they found out, the government was back on its heels and was forced to acknowledge that it had made a mistake, and now we've got this bill designed to protect some municipalities that were going to see those dramatic changes.

I want to talk about some other aspects of the bill. This bill gives Premier Harris the unilateral right, through regulations, to raise about \$6.1 billion of revenue from property taxes. Now the fourth-largest source of revenue for the province will be property taxes. This is interesting.

I'll just tell the public that we have a briefing; the opposition gets a chance to ask questions of the bureaucrats involved in the bill's design before we come before the Legislature. We said, "Now that the province is setting the educational tax rates" — in the case of businesses, about 55% to 60% of all business property taxes are now set by Mike Harris. It's not your council that's doing it; it's Mike Harris that's setting 55% to 60% of your property taxes. The problem is that it will be done through what's called regulation. The problem with that is that normally people say, "If you're going to tax me, I want an opportunity to have some input into that and I want to see that my democratically elected people are making that decision," but it will not be done here in the Legislature; it will be done down the hall in the cabinet room with the stroke of a pen. Bill 16 makes an even more sweeping move. It won't even set rates; it will simply send a bill to the municipality and say, "We want you to raise X hundreds of millions of dollars from property tax for us," just a letter saying that.

By the way, as an aside, the government will see these taxes increase year after year. They're not freezing how much money they're going to raise, they're freezing the rate, so as the assessment goes up — we're now on market value assessment — the government is expecting a windfall of revenue increases here.

1630

That's our second concern on the bill, that it now gives the cabinet the authority, with the stroke of a pen, to send a bill to any municipality in the province ordering them to raise business taxes and to collect money on behalf of the government.

In my opinion, the government now has 100% control over education. It controls all the fund-raising. Mike Harris sets the educational mill rate, \$2.5 billion of residential property taxes are now set by Mike Harris and \$3.6 billion of business property taxes are now set by Mike Harris, all by regulation. Many of my Conservative friends, before they got here, would have railed at that thought, that any government would ever give itself the authority to raise property taxes and to do it all through regulation, but that's what this bill does.

A proper accounting of the finances of Ontario now should include that \$6.1 billion of property taxes set by the province and ordered by the province. If it doesn't, I

think we are not stating our finances properly, because the province now has 100% of the obligation to pay off the debt of school boards, which is, I gather, about \$4 billion, but it's all kind of hidden off the books.

We've said this many times: If there's one document that the people of the province rely on to understand the state of the finances in their province, in their government, it's the budget, and I don't think the budget any longer reflects that, because we're not properly accounting for our education expenditures.

By the way, this bill contains several of the amendments we moved eight months ago that were rejected by the government members. We made proposals on timing. We made proposals on charities. There was a charitable organization, I think called Daybreak, from Ottawa — the member for Nepean may know the name — dealing with homeless people. They had a proposal, and if the government had listened to them and listened to our amendment, all the charities in the province would not have gone through the anguish they've gone through.

But you know what happens around here. It's unfortunate, and I must say I don't necessarily blame the Conservatives, but we're in a mode here where if the opposition proposes something, the government's got to vote against it. You may some day want to go back and look at the amendments that were proposed by us and I suspect by the NDP. Many of them the government has now had to recognize were reasonable.

One of them that you didn't adopt that I still believe is an appropriate one: The people of Ontario cannot appeal their assessment after July 29. The problem with that is that no one in this province will know the impact of their assessment on their taxes until they get their tax bill. The assessment is simply a number, until people actually get their tax bill and say: "Wait a minute. I didn't realize that my assessment now results in that level of taxation."

I say to all of us that when people find out they have missed the date to appeal their assessment — the last day you can appeal your assessment is going to be July 29. As we heard earlier, hardly anyone in the province is going to get their final 1998 tax bill until August or September. It will be then that people will say, "I want to appeal my assessment," and the answer they will get is, "Sorry, you missed the date." I think the government's making a big mistake here. It will unnecessarily anger people. You can say, "Assessment and what you pay in taxes shouldn't be related," but that's how people understand the impact of assessment.

Again, this Bill 16 delays only for a month the appeal date. If the government were, in my opinion, astute politically, you would look at that and say, "For 1998, when all this chaos is going on, surely we should give the people of Ontario an opportunity for maximum fairness here on appeal." I would hope the government would look at that.

I just want to focus a little bit on gross leases for a moment because once the landlords begin to implement this, we're all going to get phone calls. In the city of Toronto I gather they will implement the 2.5% cap for three years, and I think it's fairly straightforward. The

way I interpret the bill is that if you're a tenant on a gross lease situation, your landlord will be allowed to charge you what you paid in 1997 for realty taxes plus what you paid for business occupancy tax plus 2.5%. That will be fairly straightforward.

In the city of Toronto and others that use the 2.5% measure that will be fairly clear. But in other municipalities, and I gather that's the vast majority, people are going to be quite surprised when they find that their landlord is passing on to them a substantial increase in realty taxes, well beyond what tenants paid before in realty taxes plus business occupancy tax, for the reason I talked about earlier, and that is, they're going to pass on the average of the community business occupancy tax.

Mr Baird: Not in the capped environment.

Mr Phillips: The member says, "Not in the capped environment." I made the point that I think most municipalities are not opting for the 2.5% cap. They see significant problems in it, and I believe most municipalities will not. If across the province all the municipalities do, we've simply made virtually no progress on any property tax changes. It's just like freezing for the next three years what's been going on in the past so that to the extent that everybody uses the 2.5% cap, then that has nothing to do with property tax reform. That's just essentially for three years institutionalizing whatever problems existed there before.

Again I want to go back to the municipal clerks and treasurers' comments on the tax bills. I think Ontario was looking for a simpler system, certainly the clerks and treasurers were looking for a simpler system, and the government was selling it on the basis of this being a simpler system. The fact is, according to the clerks and the treasurers — and they are, in my opinion, the most knowledgeable in this area because they work with it on a daily basis and their whole fiscal future relies on the property tax system.

By the way, before, the further complication. The bills get thicker, by the way. Bill 106 was about 45 pages long, then Bill 149 was about 55 pages long and then Bill 164 was bigger. It's getting bigger and bigger and bigger. Every time one bill tries to fix the previous bill up, it gets bigger and more complicated.

It goes back to what most people said. We, the Ontario Legislature, would have been far better served if this thing had been at all properly thought through. We, the government, but we, the Legislature, have jerked the Ontario population around. This is the fourth major — in the community I represent, the city of Toronto, it has upset in a very major way a whole bunch of lives and caused an awful lot of real, legitimate anxiety.

1640

What we're ending up with — this is what the clerks and treasurers said about the bill: "The system will be immensely complicated by creating 84 classes and subclasses and up to 156 tax rates." By the way, I have not yet had a comment from them on Bill 16. These were the comments on the previous bill. They said: "The bills will create serious problems. They are a recipe for administra-

tive chaos." This is their language. "This is downloading the government's confusion and indecision to the municipalities." For whatever reason, we have been dealing with one bill amending another bill amending another bill, and now the fourth bill amending those bills. As I say, it's unfortunate.

My background is business. I too had three businesses, with a significant number of employees, and I started up a couple of them from scratch. So I have some appreciation of the business community. We have caused untold anxiety in the business community out there with these four bills, which would have been unnecessary if they had been properly thought through.

I did want to talk a little bit about one of the government members, the member for Scarborough East — this is how we have to refer to them — who was talking about the commitment you made. My colleague from Kingston and The Islands mentioned this earlier, but the commitment of "A promise made, a promise kept." Let me just say that this is Al Leach's promise: "My party and I will never support the imposition of market value assessment." That was underlined and what not. He would not have got elected if people in his community had ever thought he was going to bring in market value assessment. By the way, this is market value assessment. As a matter of fact, the member for Scarborough East said —

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): He said it last night.

Mr Phillips: Well, he said it today, Tony. He said, "Current value assessment and market value assessment are the same thing." They are the same thing. In fact, if you read the act, the definitions of "current value assessment" and "market value assessment" are word for word the same. We now have market value assessment.

The member for Scarborough East was saying, "We said we would do it," and all those sorts of things. Actually, you said you wouldn't do it. That was Mr Leach and Ms Bassett. So you do have some enormous anger out there of people who believed they were getting a commitment from two cabinet ministers who said they would never support the imposition of market value assessment in Metropolitan Toronto. I just raise that because the member for Scarborough East said, "We promised we would do it." You promised you wouldn't do it.

I was interested in the teeter-totter analogy too. He said, "One business tax goes down, another goes up." Let's recognize that banks go down, small business goes up. That's just the way it works because, I repeat, the banks and the financial community and institutions have been paying 75% BOT. They take realty tax and then 75% on top of it. I'm not making a value judgement on whether that was fair or unfair to the banks; I'm just saying that's the way it was. Small businesses, generally speaking, were paying 25% to 30%. Now it's going to all be averaged. So on the old teeter-totter that Mr Gilchrist mentions, I'd just say it's banks down, small business up. That's the teeter-totter.

I was a bit intrigued by him using the small business as a selling feature, when in many respects the bill is anti-small business.

The caps are a challenge. One of the problems will be that they are for three years. Once you start them, you are there for three years. It means that, for whatever reason, now that municipalities all have 100% of social housing and a major part of social assistance, if municipalities' costs go up, now, because of this bill and the way it works, there'll only be one source to cover it. If the costs are going up and they have no other choice but to look at some form of property tax increase, it has to be on the residential.

You may say, "Well, they don't have to do that," but there are municipalities across the province of Ontario, well-run municipalities, efficiently run municipalities — I believe the town of Markham is well run, well regarded. I think their taxes are going up this year, the latest I'd heard. So it does happen.

If it were to happen in any community that adopts this, they have only one choice, and that is, they have to take all of those increased costs on to the residential property tax. That's a risk in this proposal and it's a risk that municipalities now are wrestling with because once they start down the road, it locks them in.

I just wanted to chat as well, once again, on the education issue because I don't think many people in Ontario have yet recognized what an extraordinary move we've gone through here. Previously the province had no access to property tax and now it has given itself the authority to move in a very major way on property taxes. I think businesses will be quite surprised to find that now 55% to 60% of their property taxes are set by the province of Ontario.

I will be very interested to finally find out the numbers when they set them. I gather the province is expecting a fairly substantial growth in income from this. As the assessment rises on businesses and both the value of the business goes up and the assessment goes up, revenue will grow at least 2%, and probably more.

As we deal with Bill 16, and I assume that we'll be having an opportunity for further debate in committee, I look forward to dealing with some amendments to the bill and also some better government explanations on why it is that they want to do that.

One thing I forgot to do: I should have mentioned earlier that I would be splitting my time with one of my colleagues. I'm not sure whether I have to do that before we start or whether it's —

Mr Baird: Who's the other member?

Mr Phillips: Mr Colle.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): No problem.

Mr Phillips: No problem. I appreciate that, Mr Speaker. I will now be turning the floor over to my colleague, Mr Colle.

1650

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I just want to comment on one of the key things that my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt mentioned. The arbitrary cutoff date for appeals is not going to work. They've said July 29. I ask members across the way to make sure that you contact the

Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and ask them to put that back, because the tax bills are delayed. Some of them won't come out until July or August, some are even saying September. It's not fair for someone not to have any idea of what his or her new assessment is going to be, since they won't be getting their tax bills.

There are so many appeals on the board and a lot of people who are trying to find out what is actually going on. There are just so many people who have never been called back. They had this 1-800 number or hotline for the assessment department, and they could never get a human being. Sometimes they talked to a couple of people, and each one of them gave a different answer. So I certainly urge the government members to get the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Municipal Affairs to put the date back another couple of months so people can have a fair shot at appealing their taxes.

The first thing about this bill is they've given it a name which I really find laughable. I think they call it the protection act, the Small Business and Charities Protection Act. I say, protection from what? Do you know what it's protection from? It's protection from the previous bill that this government passed. It's protection from all the horrendous mistakes they imposed on people because they rushed that bill through. In fact, this bill is bigger than the one that it's protecting you from.

That was the bill that the government members said was perfect, that it was going to solve this tax mess, that we had to rush that bill through. I remember at that time we asked for the three impact studies the government had in its hands. The Ministry of Finance had three impact studies based on the assessments. They refused, under freedom of information, to give the opposition those three impact studies.

The privacy commissioner then encouraged us to ask — no, they said it had then gone to cabinet. So we had to ask cabinet for it. Cabinet replied back, saying it was confidential cabinet material and they couldn't release the impact studies.

If they had released the impact studies at that time, there would have been more ability to see that the bills they passed, Bill 149 and Bill 106, were just filled with horrendous errors. We could have avoided the tax revolt that took place. We could have avoided that if they had listened a year ago. What they did was they rushed it through so quickly that in the city of Toronto itself this assessment ended up that more than half the small businesses in Toronto were to get a tax increase of over 100%. About 19,000 businesses were going to get a tax increase of over 100%. Didn't they look at this scheme and do an analysis to see what the impact of that would have been? No, they basically just rammed it through, and then they wondered why everybody had to take to the streets. This is the government that refused to even release any impact studies, so the people couldn't find out what they were up to.

Now we're back to the square root again where they've had to correct the thousands of mistakes they made in the

other bills with this other protection bill against the Tory acts that were passed previously. We didn't have to be in this spot, but we are, and there are still problems. There are still very many problems.

Perhaps to put this in context, I remember, when the first information came out about this bill, the government said: "The bill is perfect. You don't have to change it. There are just people that are being alarmist in the street. The small business people have nothing to fear. This bill is great."

Well, the small business people I know in Toronto got their tax bills. They couldn't believe it. They were going from 10,000 bucks a year to 40,000 and 50,000 bucks a year for some shoe store or some barber shop because of the Tories' rushing that previous tax assessment stuff through. People who saw their tax bills couldn't believe their eyes: "I've got a shoe store and I've got to pay 60,000 bucks a year in property taxes?" This wasn't in one shoe store; these were 17,000 to 19,000 small business people who got these tax assaults by this government because they didn't stop to evaluate what they were doing. In fact, it's all part of this mad rush to try and somehow deal with their downloading problems and everything else that they end up making these unbelievable mistakes, and the small guy pays.

The other thing that's very interesting about this is that even now we're asking the assessment guru — there's a person by the name of Mr Larry Hummel. By the way, Price Waterhouse refused to take on the job because they said they couldn't do it in the short time frame. Price Waterhouse said they couldn't do it, but Larry Hummel said he could do it.

We asked this assessment guru from the Ministry of Finance, "Would you give us the magic formula you used to come up with this assessment system and these assessment numbers?" We asked him on March 9, "Produce the quality control data to show us how you arrived at these magical assessments." He refuses to this day to hand that information over. I hope the members on the other side will push Mr Hummel in the Ministry of Finance to hand over the quality control data to make sure this assessment was done somewhat accurately.

My contention is that the assessment is an awful mess. I even talked to the mayor of Tiny township, Mr Anthony Lancia. He said that everybody in Tiny township is appealing because they fouled up all the assessments even in Tiny township, never mind Toronto.

A lot of people think the assessors came to their door. The assessors didn't come to anybody's door. They didn't even drive by. They concocted these magical formulas with some computer geek. In some back room, they came up with something that's going to affect your business or your home for the rest of your life. We're saying: "At least come and look at our property. Maybe you'll find out that my property isn't worth \$400,000, that it's maybe worth less than that. Come and look at it." But they haven't looked at the properties. They didn't have the time. They rushed it. We would like to get that information.

In fact, I know the city of Toronto has also asked for another important piece of information. They've asked for an audit of the assessment to make sure it was done properly. Royal LePage, the real estate company, has offered to do the audit of the assessments. They already have a lot of data in their data bank. Royal LePage has said they'll do it for \$50,000 to see whether the assessments were done properly.

I hope the government, the Ministry of Finance, undertakes an audit of the assessment process, because if you look at the assessments — certainly what I'm familiar with, in the city of Toronto — they're all over the place. People who bought their property on June 30, 1996, person after person, say: "Hey, I bought it at this price. The assessment is way off, by 40,000 or 50,000 bucks."

Another thing that's very interesting is that they did a bit of a magical touch-up of the assessments. It seems that across the city a lot of the assessments in certain neighbourhoods have been low-balled and underassessed. They have no correlation with market value as of June 30, 1996. People are telling me that they think the Ministry of Finance cooked the assessment. Why did they low-ball them and make them lower than they are? They thought they could suppress the number of appeals. They said, "If your assessed value is lower, keep quiet, don't say anything, because your assessment is lower." So people are saying, "I'd better not appeal, because my assessment is actually a little lower."

They don't realize that they're not going to escape the assessor, because this assessor is going to keep coming back over and over again. Even though your house or business is under assessed this year, they're going to get you in 1999 when they come around again and do this other formula to probably increase your assessed value. Even though they seem to be a bit lower on the average, those assessments will come up again, so don't think that because the assessed value is a bit lower you can get away with it.

This system of assessment is going to guarantee that a person who does any renovations to their home — God help you if you put in air conditioning, a skylight, if you put a bathroom on the main floor. By the year 2001, when they come around every year for the reassessment, it's going to be punitive for anybody who fixes up their home, because as soon as you get an improvement on your home, this system the government has put in is going to trigger higher taxes. It says, "Fix up your home and we're going to hit you with higher taxes forever."

1700

In the past they used to do the reassessment every five, 10, 15 years, now they're going to come every year. Every time you dare paint your house or put air-conditioning in or, God help you, you put another tub in the house or another faucet or something, or fix your roof or put in a new window, they're going to come running with a tax hit. That is what the guarantee is going to be with this new system, which they say is fair.

If you look at what's happening here in Toronto, about 55% of the properties are going to get a tax decrease.

That's great and we all applaud that decrease. The problem is that another 237,000 households are going to get a tax increase. That's about the size of the city of Ottawa. Do you know what the average tax increase is going to be? It's going to be an average tax increase of about \$673 to 237,000 homes in the city of Toronto, and 43,000 of those homes are going to get an increase of between \$1,000 and \$5,000 a year, almost the size of the city of Kingston getting a tax increase of up to 5,000 bucks.

I don't care who you are or where you live in Toronto; nobody can afford all of a sudden to be hit with a \$1,000, \$2,000, \$3,000 or \$5,000 tax increase all at once. This government has the wherewithal to stop that. Just last week in the budget they gave away another \$625 million in that tax cut. I would tell the government, use that to lower property taxes. That's \$625 million they basically gave to a tax cut by accelerating the tax cut from January 1 to July. They could have used the \$625 million to keep property taxes lower. Instead, in the city of Toronto, 237,000 homes are going to get whacked with this tax increase.

Their own members said that if this system were put into place here in Toronto, they were going to resign, all the Tory members in the city of Toronto. Al Leach said to the homeowners in Cabbagetown, Moore Park and Rose-dale, "My party and I will never support the imposition of market value assessment in Metro Toronto." That's what he said when he was going door to door in June 1995. Isabel Bassett, going door to door, said: "The policy of the PC Party has always been that they will never impose market value assessment in Toronto. We remain firm in that position. A Mike Harris government will review all alternatives to market value assessment, including unit assessment, to determine whether there's an alternative. Mike Harris will relieve the upward pressure on property taxes by stopping the downloading of mandates on municipal services."

Here are two cabinet ministers who went door to door saying, "We will never impose this system." If you go up the Yonge Street corridor in Toronto, there are about 200,000 homes getting the biggest tax whack in history, and this is a government which said it would never impose this system. This is a government that came in here and said, "We will fix this system." This is about the fourth bill they've introduced to fix and fix and fix. They keep on making it so confusing that you have to be a Philadelphia or a Bay Street lawyer to figure out what the system finally is.

The ironic thing is this: This was the perfect tax bill, they said. Back in January, people all across the city began to realize that this was going to destroy small business in Ontario. So we organized small businesses across the city. We actually had to take to the streets to tell Mike Harris and the Conservatives that this tax scheme was going to kill small business. Do you know what they said? They said: "Don't worry. There's nothing wrong with it. It's just a minor blip. Our tax bill has fixed it all. We'll fix it. Don't worry." You know, from about 10 people who started this fight back in January, it increased. Before

you know it, we went from 10 to 20 to 50. We were ready to go with 10,000 small business people who were going to march on Bloor Street. That's what was going to happen.

That's why this government was forced to back down on their stupidity, because they were afraid of the 10,000 people who were going to march on the streets of Toronto. They were forced to capitulate because they had no choice, because the small business people and their supporters understood that this government was going to ruin small business in Ontario. They had to wave the white surrender flag.

Even Mr Eves himself, who I remember quite well, in Mississauga on February 7, said: "Well, that Toronto has got to pay more in taxes. They haven't been running a tight ship. They've spent too much on education, they've spent too much on public health, so Toronto should pay an extra \$400 million in property taxes." That's what Mr Ernie Eves said, I think to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, in Mississauga on February 7.

You notice we're getting closer to the election. Mr Eves saw those thousands of people in the streets of Toronto rebelling, revolting against him. He was forced to eat his words. He said, "Oh sorry, I didn't really mean in Mississauga that Toronto had to pay this." Now he has been forced to backtrack on that \$400 million extra tax on small business in Toronto. But on February 7 he was boasting: "We're going to teach Toronto a lesson. We're going to kick Toronto around. We're going to make them pay for all their past sins."

As you notice now, as the new Mike Harris mask is on, where they have to write cheques to get re-elected, all of a sudden they're coming along and saying, "Whatever we have to do, we will now pay the piper." That's what part of this bill does. It acknowledges the fact that Ernie Eves and Al Leach and Mike Harris were totally wrong in this assessment system they tried to force down the throats of the people of Ontario, and they've had to rewrite the whole darn thing.

Ironically, this was the system that was supposed to fix all systems because the old outdated thing didn't work. Do you know what they're doing with this bill? Half the property tax system is now frozen, based on the old assessments again. That's what they did. In other words, the 60 million bucks that we paid the assessors to concoct that computer formula is useless, because this bill says it's no longer a valid assessment system for the commercial side, which is half the system, so they put a freeze on it. Do you know what values they're going back to? They're going back to the 1940 values again. They've admitted that the assessment process they've undertaken was totally flawed, totally wrong and totally fraudulent. This bill says that the assessment concoction of Ernie Eves and Al Leach was totally flawed. Now they're going back to the system they were complaining about that had to be fixed and saying, "No, it's frozen again." It's frozen again for the commercial side.

I wonder what's going to happen to the other 250,000-odd people — not odd people — taxpayers in the city of

Toronto and other cities who are going to get huge tax increases because of this tax scheme. I wonder if Ernie Eves and Al Leach and Isabel Bassett are going to leave these people out to freeze. I think this government owes it to them to also protect these people from these tax increases because this tax scheme, this tax assessment system, was concocted by them, it was forced upon them, and this is a government that ran against this being imposed. I don't think this government has any choice but to also protect the 237,000 people, certainly in Toronto and people in Tiny township and everywhere, who are going to get this mammoth tax increase. The government should come in and protect them.

It has been forced to come in and protect small business. It had better come in and also protect the homeowners who are getting this big whack, because this government has the money. In the budget, as I have said, it gave up \$625 million without even batting an eyelash. Why not put some money where your mouth is and lower property taxes for these people who, through no fault of their own, are now going to have to pay mammoth increases?

1710

I have seniors living in Leaside on a fixed income of \$15,000. One senior told me her taxes are going from \$1,000 to \$4,000. You tell me how that senior in Leaside who is paying \$1,000 or \$1,200 — you may say that was too low — now can pay \$4,000. What will she have to cut out of her budget? Will she have to do without heat, light, a telephone bill? Will she have to do without a grocery bill? What will that senior do who, as I said, wants to stay in her little bungalow in Leaside? She doesn't want to be a burden on the government. She wants to stay in her house that she worked her whole life to pay off. She raised her family in it. She is in that home. She doesn't want to be pushed out of her home, but when she goes from \$1,000 to \$4,000, she is in trouble. She, like many other people in older homes, through no fault of their own are victims of this government's not thinking of the consequences.

It's up to this government, as I said, to think of those on fixed incomes especially, where they get a break. One of the things the government says is, "They can put a reverse mortgage on their property." If you have worked your whole life trying to get rid of your mortgage, why would you in your later years all of a sudden want to put another mortgage back on your property because you can't pay your taxes? These are not business people. They're not corporations that can write things off. These are people who are making \$15,000 or \$20,000 a year on a meagre pension. How can they go from paying \$1,000 or \$2,000 to \$3,000, \$4,000 or \$5,000? They can't do it.

Everybody says Toronto hasn't paid its fair share or Oakville hasn't paid its fair share or Tiny township hasn't paid its fair share, but it comes to a point where you say this government now has the money. It now controls education. Tax revenues are coming in. We're no longer in the recession. It has the money to protect these people who are going to suffer these horrendous increases.

I worry about even the people who get decreases. I know in my area of the city some people are getting \$200

decreases, but I wonder what happens if they're on a street that all of a sudden, by the year 1999, becomes hot on the real estate market. Maybe it doesn't happen in Listowel, or maybe in some parts of Listowel it happens, or in Tiny township, but in Toronto the history has been that you may have a home on a street and all of a sudden, because the real estate chemistry takes off, your street can go from being a very ordinary street to a so-called hot street. You're sitting in a house that you thought was a modest house, and all of a sudden it goes up in value.

What this bill doesn't protect is that all of a sudden there's an escalation, and sometimes property values in Toronto go from \$150,000 to maybe \$250,000 overnight. That can happen, and it has happened in the past. People living in those homes have no protection. What are they going to do with their house, when this reassessment takes place year after year, if their property taxes go up? They worry about that.

Another interesting anomaly about this bill is where you have two similar residential properties. In one residential property you could have a sixplex or a fourplex, and next door is a single-family home with two people on a fixed income. In that fourplex you've got four income properties maybe giving the owner of that fourplex \$20,000 that he or she could make on it, and maybe there are about 12 people living in that fourplex. Do you know that under this bill, the person living in the single-family home — it could be two people or one person — pays the same as that income property which is a fourplex or sixplex? I ask you if that's fair.

I don't think it's fair. I think that if you have a multi-income property which is a threeplex, fourplex, fiveplex, sixplex, you shouldn't pay as much as the person next door who has one or two people living in the house with no income. It's not an income property. But this bill doesn't protect people in that regard.

Therefore, what people are telling me is they're going to turn all their homes into fourplexes and threeplexes. You might as well do that, because you could get all the income from renting the first, second, third, fourth floor. If I'm sitting in a home and I've just got my own income, I don't rent it out, I lose out with this assessment system.

This is not fair. It is something the government has refused to fix. It is not fair, again, that someone in a single-family home who doesn't have any income is paying the same tax as someone next door who maybe has the same size property, same size lot, but has divided it up into four or five or six income properties. That should be looked at and should be made fair. Perhaps what to look at is, how does this help that person, as I said, especially on fixed income who has no potential to get any other income? That's another anomaly I pick out of this bill.

A person I like to quote and who I've quoted in the past, someone I disagree with many times but I agree with on certain occasions, is Terence Corcoran from the Globe and Mail. He said basically that this government was acting too irrationally, that it should have slowed down and looked at the consequences. "Uniform assessments and tax rates simply cannot survive the real world for

long. Dazzled by the beauty of its One Big System models, the government pushed ahead with a rushed property assessment schedule. Valuations were conducted as of 1996, making no allowances whatsoever for distortions that existed in the market then or any changes that have occurred since. It was rushed, it was poorly planned, and it was ill-considered from the start."

That's why I think it's critical for this government and members of this Legislature to make sure that audit is done of the assessment system. That is available to the government. If they want to do it, Royal LePage has offered to do the audit to make sure the assessments were done properly.

Councillor Norm Gardner in the city of Toronto has launched a legal suit against the assessment system because he says that basically the whole assessment process is totally fouled up. He's got example after example of properties that were bought on the magic assessment dates that are way off the market price and the sale price. Whether you go to Bloor Street, King Street, Queen Street, all over the place, the assessed values don't correlate with the real market price.

That's why it's important to have an audit done of the assessment that was done. It's also important for the Ministry of Finance to hand over the quality control data and to show us how they concocted this computer formula to give people their assessed values. We need that information as we proceed in examining this bill. The last time the government proceeded without giving us that kind of information, you got yourself into one heck of a mess where you had to come back again here in May with another bill to protect us from the passed bills. We don't need to come back here again in six months with another bill to protect us from Bill 16.

I ask you at this time to stop and listen to people who are saying: "Don't shut the gate for appeals on July 29. We need a couple of more months."

We also need to get that information from the Ministry of Finance so that we can find out whether these assessments were done accurately. My assumption is that these assessments were not done accurately, that they were done in too much of a hurry. I agree with Price Waterhouse, who said you can't do this type of analysis.

In closing, the only Conservative member I saw marching with us on the street was the member for Scarborough West, Jim Brown. He was there because he knew you guys were wrong. He had the guts to join us in the street. I wish the rest of you had been in the streets to stop this craziness. We may have to get back on the streets again unless you fix this tax mess that you've got us into in Ontario.

1720

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Comments and questions?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I think — not I think; I know — I enjoyed the presentation by the two previous members. There's an irony in this when you read this bill, because it really demonstrates that a government can make choices, and clearly this government has made a

choice. They've chosen this particular instance to give businesses within Ontario a cap of 2.5% on their municipal taxes, guaranteeing that because of the assessment fiasco in Toronto, businesses would be protected and they would not see their taxes go up more than 2.5%. That I understand. I want to see the small business community have a fair shake and I don't expect them to pay more than they should because of this government's bungling. But when it comes to other people in our society, the government doesn't seem to make the same kinds of choices.

I listened intently to the Minister of Education. He has now made a decision that he's going to deregulate tuition fees for university students in post-graduate work and a whole bunch of other programs. We know what that means. We know that a student's tuition fees at the university level are going to go up far more than 2.5%. In some cases we expect tuitions to rise as much as 50% in one year.

It's interesting that the government is able to make a choice that they're going to cap the increases on taxes to businesses in municipalities, because clearly the government has chosen sides. They say, "We like business, we support business, so we're going to cap the taxes, but to heck with the students." The students of Ontario are not getting the same kind of treatment that the people in the business community are.

Clearly this government has made a choice. I understand what that choice is but I think it's the wrong choice. If you're going to afford one segment of your population some protection because of government fiascos in taxation and downloading and a whole bunch of other things, you should afford the students and other people in our society the same kind of protection.

Mr Baird: I'm pleased to respond to my colleague the member for Oakwood and, before him, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Let's be clear on one thing first with respect to the comments made by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. In a capped environment, those landlords who have gross leases must pass through the actual business occupancy tax that their tenants paid in 1997. So it's not an average where banks would pay 70% and small retail would pay 30%; it's the actual. That's something important to put on the record.

The second thing which I think needs to be responded to is with respect to the appeal date extension. Extending the appeal date until after the final tax bill is to be sent out is somewhat of a red herring because people can't appeal it, ever. They can't appeal the municipal tax rate that their local municipality puts forward; they can only appeal their assessment, which they are in current possession of. I think it's important to put that on the record because I believe it is somewhat of a red herring.

This assessment system is not perfect — no tax is perfect, that it's all good, with no down side — but it's more fair and it's more equitable. Homeowners, be they in Scarborough-Agincourt or Nepean, are being treated very unfairly by the current system. They have been overpaying for many, many years. This government is addressing the

inequities in the system and getting control of some absolutely spiralling education taxes. This government has announced it will be cutting, over the next eight years, the huge inequity here in the city, which these two honourable members represent, by more than \$402 million.

I think the actions of this government contrast sharply with our friends in the Liberal Party. They sat by and watched education taxes spiral out of control, and their answer to this problem was to bring in the commercial concentration tax — not only did they whack Toronto once, they wanted to go for a second time — a tax that was so bad that even Tony Silipo and Frances Lankin in the NDP got rid of it. When the NDP got rid of a tax, it must be a really bad tax.

Mr Gerretsen: I'd like to congratulate the member for Scarborough-Agincourt and the member for Oakwood for their excellent presentations.

To the member for Nepean I would simply say that he doesn't know what he's talking about. It's as simple as that. He has to understand that local property taxes are based on two factors: One aspect is the assessment, the current value or the market value of your property, which, by the way, Minister of Municipal Affairs Al Leach said during the last election his government would never impose. It's the valuation of the property times the tax rate.

Mr Baird: You can't appeal the tax rate.

Mr Gerretsen: Of course you can't appeal the tax rate. You can deal with your councils every three years if you don't like what they've done with respect to the tax rate. You fire them; you don't elect them again. But it's the assessment we're talking about.

Mr Baird: But they've got the assessment now.

Mr Gerretsen: But, sir, what you don't understand is that since the assessment numbers —

The Acting Speaker: Address your comments through the Chair, please.

Mr Gerretsen: I always address the comments to you, Mr Speaker, because I know that's the way it's supposed to happen.

The point simply is this: The assessment information that has been given to people this year is so different from the previous assessment information that the average person will not be able to understand, from the assessment numbers in themselves, whether their taxes are going up or down this year. It is only after they have received the final tax bill for a particular year that they can determine whether the assessment numbers have gone up or down, by taking the total amount of taxes they pay this year, less the total amount of taxes next year, and say, "Yes, I'm paying more," or "I'm paying less." Until that bill actually comes in, the average person will not know whether their assessment went up or down.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): If there were some common trends borne out by the comments from the members for Scarborough-Agincourt and Oakwood, it is that this bill is really another example of government mismanagement. They came in with the bill to try and deal with assessment of property taxation, then they had to bring in another bill to try and fix that up, then

another bill to try and fix it up. What that has done is really just cause confusion, not only to ratepayers but to municipalities. Windsor is as good an example as any. They're going through budget deliberations right now, as we speak, and this is so late in the year compared to previous years. In previous years they would have done this in December, but they hadn't had the numbers available to be able to have those budget deliberations.

I recall going to a briefing for city council shortly before Christmas with respect to the downloading numbers. In Windsor they had no idea what they were going to be. The chief administrative officer said, "This download exercise is like giving someone access to your cheque-book." They were going to have to pay for services that were going to be downloaded on the municipality without having any idea of what the cost of those was going to be and what portion of them was going to come back from the province.

We know the government has said this is all going to be revenue-neutral, but it's not. Taxes are going to go up almost 5% in the city of Windsor, and now councillors are going to be faced with having to decide whether they're going to put a cap on some taxpayers with respect to their property tax increases of 2.5% and trying to sell to residential ratepayers the fact that they're going to have to make up that difference. It's a tough choice and it's not fair.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Oakwood has two minutes to respond.

Mr Colle: What this exercise may bring to light is that this whole property tax approach we have, even going across party lines, has got to be looked at. I think even the government realizes they're caught in a real quagmire here. I think they're in quicksand. They're not going to get out of this tax mess, because as they try to plug one hole they have to plug 10 others.

As you know, this government had to be forced to come to their senses, and it wasn't because they wanted to, believe me. As I said, people had to take to the streets. Day after day we took to the streets, not with big media, not with big business. They were small residential taxpayers, small business people who had to go to the streets day in, day out. They scared the bejabbers out of this government.

Now this government is running a bit scared, because we're much closer to the election. I encourage everyone across Ontario to take heed of this message: Don't pay that extra tax. Whether you're in Peterborough or Sarnia, make Mike Harris pay the tax. I know he went to Ottawa and wrote a cheque for \$25 million. Mike Harris has to pay the bill. Don't pay the extra tax bill, those of us across Ontario who get a higher assessment because of this tax scheme. Mike Harris should pay for that. He's got the money.

Don't go quietly. If you have to go to the street, get their attention. Now they want to be re-elected and, believe me, they'll write the cheques. But they're not going to do it if you're quiet and passive. I encourage you to organize. Be focused. Let the public know that you're

fighting for them and you will get this government to also be fair to you. Don't take it sitting down. Get up and fight back.

1730

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Silipo: I'm glad to have the opportunity to join in this debate and to lead off debate for our caucus on this. I would just like to advise you at the outset that I will be dividing my time on this with our municipal affairs critic, the member for Cochrane South.

I want to start by going back to the tone and the approach that was set in this debate on Bill 16 by the spokespeople for the government today, the member for Nepean, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, and the member for Scarborough East, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

I think both of them said we ought to look at this bill in the broader context of the budget and the economy and the economic policies of the government. I'd be quite happy to spend the whole hour talking about the economic policies of the government, but we'll have an opportunity to talk about those on other occasions as well, particularly when we debate Bill 15, which is the bill that puts in place a number of the measures contained in the budget. But of course this bill does as well, so I understand, from their perspective, their wanting to talk about what they see as being the positive things that are happening in the economy.

Again we heard the line about, "Why is the Ontario economy growing?" To hear them it would be because Mike Harris is Premier of the province and because of the policies of the government. They conveniently forget that there are many other factors that not only we would say are far more important than the policies of Mike Harris but also economists are saying are far more important than the policies of Mike Harris in terms of what is going on in our economy: the link that we have, for example, to the American economy and what is happening there; the relatively low interest rates that we're happy to see the federal government continue to ensure happen. Whether they are ensuring them actively or not, I don't know, because they've tended to take kind of a hands-off attitude in the past, but they're there and they are helping.

I also hear them say from time to time, "If that's all it is, then why, for example, are jurisdictions like BC not doing as well?" Of course one of the reasons is that a jurisdiction like BC is tied in much more to the Asian economy than Ontario is. That explains, at least in part, the difference.

But at the heart of what they always talk about is the 30% income tax cut and how that is injecting money into people's hands. I don't want to talk at length about the income tax cut because that's not directly in front of us here in this bill, but it is, of course, something they continue to put forward as being the main reason why the economy is growing, why the jobs are there. Again, I think it's all those other reasons that not just I but, more impor-

tant, various economists say are assisting the economy to grow, assisting Ontario to grow.

We know that on a day-to-day basis people are feeling the impact of the tax cut in all sorts of ways: in terms of money that isn't there to pay for the services in health care and education that we need in this province; in terms of the additional user fees that many taxpayers across the province are having to pay in a variety of ways to make up for the lack of services and the reduction in services; and of course knowing, as we do, that the people who benefit from the tax cut are not the typical families, are not the middle- and low-income families in Ontario, but indeed are those among the richest in the province and that there is very clearly in the policies of Mike Harris a shifting from individuals and families of modest and low means to those who are well-off. There is very clearly a shift in this way in terms of money, in terms of power, in terms of decision-making. That is at the heart of the Mike Harris revolution. That is at the heart of the Conservative government's policies and that is what is happening.

One of the things we see as a result of this is that there is an increasing shift on to the property tax base for a number of costs. The exercise that the government got into which began in a big way last year and which resulted in the government having us here for the good part of a year in this Legislature with piece after piece of legislation, with, as we now see, not particularly well-thought-out legislation, has resulted in a number of decisions that have pushed on to the property tax base the cost of many services which ought not to be on the property tax base at all.

Some of those services certainly have been there — education — for some years and, quite frankly, no government has been able to fix that one in terms of moving them off the property tax base. The government seemed to be prepared to want to do that, but of course even they were looking at a trading back and, as they've done in the end, they have traded back some of those costs for social service costs and some health care costs, which again are costs that have no relationship to the property tax base.

Why do I talk about the property tax base? It's because that essentially is what this bill deals with. Within the whole treatment of the property tax system, we see that again there has been an interesting evolution if not in the government's thinking, at least in the government's actions.

I go back to the way the government spokespeople began this debate, and they talked a lot about the budget context. I want to suggest to them, and I want to suggest to you, Speaker, that it would have been more appropriate for them to have talked about the other context, which of course brings us this bill, and that is the pre-election context.

We know that one of the fundamental reasons why Mike Harris and Ernie Eves have changed their minds on some important issues with respect to property taxes in this province, particularly as they apply to small business, is that there is imminently, in the near future, an election looming. I think, because of poor management or because of I'm not sure why, they had to change their tone, be-

cause the tone that was set out by the finance minister of this province back on February 5 — as recently as February 5 — when he was trying to justify why there should continue to be a differentiated business tax rate for the education portion of the property tax that they had chosen to leave in place, why there should be a differentiated rate across the province, why businesses in the Toronto area ought to continue to be taxed at a much higher rate than businesses across not only the rest of the province but even the rest of the GTA — he had some very harsh words. It wasn't just a soft explanation about the past. He had some very harsh words. I'd like to quote a couple of them for you, Speaker.

He said on February 5: "Let me be blunt about what Toronto wants us to do. Toronto is asking us to make the rest of the province responsible for the cumulative impact of decades of irresponsible spending decisions and questionable programs approved by successive Toronto councils and schools boards. Toronto is asking us to make businesses and municipalities in the rest of the province pay the freight for the fact that Toronto politicians raised spending year after year and took the easy way by loading taxes on to businesses."

That was the attitude of the Minister of Finance back in February of this year. Isn't it interesting that one of the changes we see in this bill is doing exactly what the minister said at that point he was not prepared to do, which was to begin at least a process of addressing the inequities in the funding? I'm glad the minister and the government have come to their senses on that.

I'm glad they have taken literally and virtually piece by piece the proposal that was put forward by Mayor Lastman — I don't know whether it was officially adopted by council, but it certainly was put forward — which was to say, "If you're not prepared to deal with this inequity now, as you should, at least begin to phase in a solution." There was a proposal to phase that in over eight years and, lo and behold, in the budget of the week before last what did we see but exactly that approach.

To start by addressing one piece that's in this bill directly, I would have to say that clearly is something we are glad to see is there, although I would be interested in seeing the actual legislation because I understand that what's going to happen on the piece that applies to this year is that that's going to be done through regulation and then we will see legislation come this fall that will deal with the rest of the package.

Why that's the case, I don't know. Maybe it's because the government wants to finally be careful in terms of putting legislation together that makes sense as opposed to the kind of mess that we've seen on the rest of the pieces here in which we have parts of this bill trying to, for the third and fourth time, fix the problem that they have caused with previous pieces of legislation.

1740

But on that piece, that is, on beginning to phase in a change that is to bring in a partial equalization of the commercial and industrial education taxes as announced in the budget, we're happy that at least that realization has

fallen upon the shoulders of the minister. The government has finally realized that was a problem that was real and that their position, as set out in a really strong and I would say confrontational tone, to say the least, by the Minister of Finance on February 5 was just not on. They have realized that.

They have realized that they could not continue to stand up against the small business sector, not just because they could not afford politically to alienate that particular component of the community — I suspect that's probably the primary reason why they did it. But I hope that somewhere along the line they also realized that in terms of the economy of this province the words they had been saying to us, that small businesses create the jobs across this province, you can't say on the one hand and continue to beat up on small businesses in what continues to be the core of the small business sector and indeed the business sector across the province, which is Toronto and the rest of the GTA. I'm glad that they've come to that realization.

That really is the approach I want to try to take to this bill as a whole, which is to say that I find a number of provisions in this bill ones that certainly move in the right direction. I mentioned that one; I want to mention a couple of others.

I want to also be very clear in saying to the government that we're glad, even though they're not prepared to admit it, that they're finally realizing they've made a mess of this problem, particularly on the small businesses taxes. Although, as I say, we'll never hear the words from them admitting they made a mistake, at least the provisions that are in this bill clearly say to us and, more importantly, clearly say to small businesses out there that they have made a mistake and they are trying to fix the problem.

We will have an opportunity, I hope, when this bill goes to committee to actually get into the details of this and to see if they've fixed the problems as they should. But I want to just say at this particular juncture in the debate that I'm happy there are some improvements here.

One of the other major changes in that direction is this cap on increases in taxes for small businesses at 2.5%. It's an interesting way in which the government has gone about doing this, but let's just again remind ourselves and remind people about the background that led to this.

We had a situation in which the government, first of all, put out the initial decisions. Municipality after municipality, certainly my own municipality here in the new city of Toronto, looked at the impacts of this. Small businesses finally began to realize, when they actually began to see the numbers, what many of us had been saying to them over the last year, which is: "Watch out. These changes the Tory government is making are going to hurt you and are going to hurt you big time."

Of course, we realize, as with many things, it isn't until people see the writing in black and white that they actually believe or do not believe what is going on. In this case, it was not very hard for them to see that the new assessment scheme that the government of the day, the Harris government, had wanted to implement and still wants to implement is the market value assessment system, which

they call current value assessment. We finally, after a couple of attempts, have had some sense of admission from the government side through the member for Scarborough East that in fact it really is one and the same. Again, it's going contrary to what they said in the election they would do, or a number of them, including the Minister of Municipal Affairs. But here we have it.

Current value assessment, market value assessment, actual value assessment, whatever you want to call it, the scheme that's in place now, if not stopped or reversed by this or future governments, will mean that businesses, small businesses in particular, would get hit big time. They would see huge increases in their property taxes. We're not talking about small increases here of 3%, 4%, or 5%. We're talking about major increases. In fact, on the business side, we would be seeing increases, subject to this 2.5% cap — and I want to come back and talk about this — in the range of, on the average, 175% across the whole commercial sector.

That kind of increase, according to figures here in the city of Toronto, would simply have put many small businesses out of business. I have example after example of small businesses saying to me, as they said to many of us, "It's not just a question of us not wanting to pay these taxes; it's quite simply a question of not being able to." The increase alone in the tax would have been higher for many small businesses than the actual revenue coming into the business.

I kept saying to people, "We told you for a year that this was going to happen." Finally we see the numbers there. What can be done? Will this government listen? My sense all along was that the government had no choice but to listen at the end of the day. The government had no choice, because they could not allow small businesses to go under in this way. Even they, in the worst of their ideological bent, would have had to acknowledge that this would have meant that many small businesses would have gone under. The solution that the government came up with was to cap increases for small businesses at 2.5%.

On that, I want to, on a first level, say that at least it's a step in the right direction. Of course, what it doesn't do — and I have to admit that for many small businesses they have created a huge sense of relief, a huge sense that at least they will be able to manage if that's what they have to deal with. Zero would have been better, but 2.5% they can manage. Of course, it is 2.5% for each of the next three years, so it's not just 2.5%. But then we have to again, as we tried to do before, say to the small businesses and say to the government: "What happens after this three-year period? What happens then?" Who knows?

The only thing that's certain is that three years from now the provincial election will have come and gone. That's about the only certainty. Because no matter when Mike Harris decides to call the election, whether it's this fall, next spring, or whether he decides to go to the full five years, it certainly will be within the next three years. So the one convenient objective that the 2.5% cap for each of the next three years achieves is that it pushes off the big decision to the time after the next election.

One of the things, for example, that I wonder is what's going to actually show up on the property tax bill. Is it going to be the 2.5%? Obviously that will be the increase for municipalities that opt to go into this, and certainly I suspect that the Toronto municipality will do that. A few others might; perhaps many will not. But one of the interesting things will be to see what happens on that tax bill. On a pure application of the legislation, as I understand it, you would have to show, not just the 2.5% — you might want to say, "Well, this is what it is obviously because that's what you have to pay, small business operator, because that's what it is on a 2.5%," but I think in full honesty and in fairness, that bill would also have to show what the tax might otherwise have been.

I certainly want to suggest to municipal councils, as they are doing this, that they could put out that information, not as a way to scare people but as a way to remind people that all we've got here is a temporary solution at best. As I say, in the worst of my thinking, it would be a solution that simply allows Mike Harris to get over the next election, and then we'll see what happens. But that's what we've got. This is a partial solution. It's a solution that gets us beyond the next election. It's a solution that says, "Yes, we'll manage the situation for the next couple of years." And then what?

The other big piece that comes into this and has to be played into this is, "What about the rest of the property taxpayers?" As happy as we are that at least the government is taking some steps to protect small business, what about homeowners?

1750

To hear again particularly the member for Scarborough East earlier on, you would think that he stands proud, although he stands proud of whatever decision the government makes, whether it's the same as last year's or last month's or completely the opposite of that. He's certainly one who's able to continue to take the line that the government puts out on any particular issue. That's fine. That's his prerogative. That's certainly part of his makeup and his ability, and that's the way it is.

But what about homeowners? Why does it make sense, I want to say to the government members, to provide this protection only to small businesses? Why does it not make sense to provide the same protection to the homeowners who are going to see huge increases in their property taxes?

I want to give some examples. Across the city of Toronto there will be, yes, a majority of people who under the current value assessment scheme will get a decrease, but there is a huge chunk of people, 44%, who will get increases, and not just small increases but major increases of, on average, \$600, \$700. In fact, those averages translate percentage-wise to about 35%.

In fact, even with the phase-in, whether it's here in Toronto or other places — and I realize this is particularly an issue here in Toronto — if a municipality decides to use the full phase-in period of eight years that the legislation allows, they're going to be facing increases of 5%, 6%, 7%, and that's assuming that the overall budget of the

municipality will stay what it is today. We know they've decided that for this year, but we don't know what's going to happen next year and the year after. We don't know what's going to happen, and the reason we don't know is because the full impact of the download is yet to be felt out there. While we can all rejoice and be happy about the growth in the economy, I don't know anybody in this room who would really want to make a strong argument that three years from now the economy is going to be continuing to grow as it is growing today.

What if it isn't? Then the only choice municipalities have is to make really major decisions about what services they not only tinker with but really drastically cut, or in order to maintain those services they have to increase property taxes. Who's going to have to pay for those? It's going to be the homeowners who will already have been hit by that time with double-digit increases just to deal with the assessment changes alone and then will have to face even bigger increases to deal with those costs.

To hear some of the members opposite, when we say those things it's fearmongering. They also accused us of fearmongering when we were raising the very same objections around small businesses, and we've been proven right on that. In fact, the government's actions in this bill prove us right on that. The government's actions in this bill tell us very clearly that not only were we right but that many small businesses were right when they realized they were on the brink of extinction and the government simply had to do something.

That remains for us a major concern: Why not provide the same kind of treatment to homeowners that we are providing in this bill to small businesses and to multi-unit residential categories? That to us would seem to make a lot of sense and we'll be pursuing this issue as the bill proceeds from here. I ask the government to seriously consider that as something that would show the same kind of equitable treatment right across that you are prepared to show at least to small businesses. In the same way that small businesses would have been hurt by your actions had you not brought in the provisions that are in this bill, many homeowners will find it impossible, not just difficult, to deal with the increases in the property taxes that will come about as a result of the changes, as a result of the new system.

Tonight, for example, the Toronto city council begins its discussion on this issue in terms of what they are going to do. I expect there will be lots of citizens, both outside Metro Hall and inside Metro Hall, watching and following very attentively what's going on. I certainly plan to be there. I know there have been rallies and other things planned in front of Metro Hall at 7:30 tonight. I think it just shows the concern that's there.

I want to say to the government that they ought not for a second to think that if people aren't expressing their dissatisfaction today, somehow that's an issue that's going to disappear or that somehow people don't feel as strongly about this. I want to remind the government members again that just like on the small business side, when it wasn't until people actually saw the numbers in front of

them that the reaction came, in the same way you will see the reaction from homeowners on this.

I don't think the fact that it's going to be during the summer is going to make this issue go away. In fact, it's going to be a hot summer, I say to the members opposite, and it's not just the weather I'm thinking about. It's going to be a hot summer, because that is when people will realize — that's one of the unfortunate things with this, that people will not realize until July, maybe even August, when they get their final tax bill, what's going to happen. But when that happens, believe you me, the reaction will be at least comparable to what we've seen with the small business sector.

Maybe the government will want to wait until then to resolve the problem. Quite frankly, they can take the wiser

action now, when this bill goes to committee, and be prepared to make some amendments to resolve the problem that is otherwise going to be there and that is going to continue to be there through the summer and when we come back here in the fall. I say to the government that I hope they will look at that.

At this point I want to mention briefly that in the business occupancy tax we have another very clear example.

Speaker, looking at the time, perhaps I can just leave that for when we resume debate. I'd be happy to pick up at that point.

The Acting Speaker: It being almost 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock tonight.

The House adjourned at 1757.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Second Session, 36th Parliament

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Deuxième session, 36^e législature

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 13 May 1998

Mercredi 13 mai 1998



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 13 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 13 mai 1998

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAX CUTS FOR PEOPLE AND FOR SMALL BUSINESS ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998

SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES IMPÔTS DES PARTICULIERS ET DES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Mr Baird, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to cut taxes for people and for small business and to implement other measures contained in the 1998 Budget / Projet de loi 15, Loi visant à réduire les impôts des particuliers et des petites entreprises et à mettre en œuvre d'autres mesures contenues dans le budget de 1998.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe it has been agreed upon between the parties that if any party is not here to have their leadoff speaker, that time will be postponed till the next time we call this and they will have the opportunity then to lead off with their time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it agreed? Agreed.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Mr Speaker, I wonder if I could raise another point of order and deal with another matter. It deals with the late show that involves the member for Windsor-Sandwich and the Minister of Energy. I wonder if that late show could be postponed until the Tuesday after we come back.

The Acting Speaker: I don't see any members from the third party. Was it agreed with them?

Mr Gerretsen: They have no objection as far as I know.

Hon Mr Sterling: Only, as far as I know, the member for Kingston and The Islands should refer to me as the Minister of the Environment. I know it was a slip that he called me the Minister of Energy.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sure that's not intentional to irritate your feelings, Minister. Member for Nepean.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I would indicate at the outset of my remarks that I will be sharing my time with the member for Halton Centre and the hardworking member for Northumberland.

I'm very pleased and proud to be able to speak today on behalf of Bill 15. Hardworking Ontarians support the measures in Bill 15 for good reason, because these measures are the key measures from the 1998 budget and are part of making Ontario the best place in the world to live, work, invest and raise a family.

All Ontarians, I believe, can be very proud of the accomplishments of the Ontario economy over the past three years. The Ontario economy is booming. Between February 1997 and February 1998, we saw more jobs created here in Ontario than at any other time in any other one-year period in our history, and that is indeed good news.

The tax cuts for people and for Ontario small businesses in Bill 15 will help continue the unprecedented rate of job growth Ontario is experiencing, and that is indeed good news, because there are a number of priorities of the recent budget, many contained in Bill 15, particularly for cutting income taxes to create jobs. Allowing consumers to keep more of their hard-earned dollars is having a tremendously positive effect on the Ontario economy.

That's particularly the case in the region of Ottawa-Carleton where unemployment, just a few short years ago, was at 10.8%. I know, Mr Speaker, you share my hope and optimism to see it down to 7.1%. The measures in this budget, I believe, will help push unemployment lower. It allows more people to keep more of their hard-earned tax dollars and to spend it in the community, which is indeed good news.

The government promised to the people of Ontario a 30% income tax cut over three years. As a result of the four steps of the Ontario tax cut, the Ontario economy has performed even far greater than optimistic projections contained in the last two budgets. We are accelerating the final stage of the tax cuts to try to build on that economic growth, with the final stage of the tax cuts taking effect six months earlier than was forecast, on July 1, 1998.

Interjection.

Mr Baird: "That's good news," the member for Scarborough-Ellesmere says. Indeed. All taxpayers will benefit from the 30.2% rate cut. All taxpayers with incomes of under \$60,000 will receive an income tax cut of at least 30% or more. Taxpayers with incomes of \$250,000 or more will receive, on average, a tax cut of only 18%. This tax cut disproportionately benefits hardworking middle-class families and that is good news, whether those hardworking families be in Kingston township or in Nepean or in Oakville or in Belleville.

Sixty-four per cent of the benefits of this tax cut will be concentrated on middle-income Ontarians earning

between \$25,000 and \$75,000 a year. Bill 15 would amend the Income Tax Act to implement the final phase of the income tax cut, which would reduce the personal income tax rate from 45% to 42.75% of the basic federal tax for 1998. It would reduce it to 40.5% of the basic federal tax for 1999 and subsequent years. That is good news because we know that tax increases kill jobs.

The member for Scarborough-Agincourt, when he was the official opposition finance critic five years ago, said the last time the Ontario income tax was increased that that income tax increase would kill about 100,000 jobs. Regrettably, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt was right. In fact, tens and tens of thousands of jobs were lost in large measure due to the tax increase contained in that budget.

But this seeks to redress that and to get those jobs back, because the people of Ontario, in Nepean and Barrhaven and Bells Corners, are concerned about high taxes and the effect they have on their ability to raise their families. That's a real concern for all members.

Finally, Bill 15 would also adjust the Fair Share health care levy to reflect the change in income tax rates. That helps to make the tax cuts progressive and helps to make the tax cuts benefit middle-income families making between \$25,000 and \$75,000 a year.

Bill 15 also contains a small business corporations tax cut. Last year, small business in Ontario created an estimated 82% of all new private sector jobs in Ontario. That is indeed good news. Many individual small business owners told us that further cuts to small business taxes would help them create even more jobs. We responded to this advice. We are cutting the small business corporation tax in half, from 9.5% to 4.75%, the lowest rate in Canada, over the next eight years. That tax cut will help the more than 90,000 small businesses continue to create jobs. We are phasing in the tax reduction over eight years to help the province meet its fiscal plans while ensuring that the small business sector continues to play a key role in the Ontario economy.

Bill 15 would amend the Corporations Tax Act to implement these taxes. It would legislate the full eight-year schedule of reductions to give businesses certainty that these tax cuts will be delivered. That is something that's good news because a lot of Ontarians were somewhat sceptical of a 30% provincial income tax reduction during the last provincial election. They didn't believe anyone would do it. I think we've proven that a promise made is a promise kept. With this legislation we are putting in stone these tax reductions, which will be good news for small business people so they can make decisions based on those tax rates. We hope that would further assist the solid job creation measures contained in previous budgets and will help the Ontario economy grow and rebound.

There are a number of other very worthwhile initiatives contained in the budget and in Bill 15 — the Ontario film and television production services tax credit. Ontario is Canada's leading film and television production centre. In 1996 the film and television industry supported about

23,000 direct jobs in Ontario. Our government recognizes the importance of this industry to Ontario. We are taking action to continue to support job creation in this sector and ensure that we maintain a pre-eminent position in the industry.

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Not too many weeks ago I was listening to the radio and they had a discussion on the tax competitiveness and the tax credit competitiveness of the provincial economy. They were able to compare Ontario with British Columbia and other provinces. They interviewed a number of representatives from studios south of the border. They all acknowledged that Ontario is making it extremely attractive to create jobs here, and we're pleased to have those jobs indeed.

We want to take action to ensure that Ontario continues to be a world leader in film production and help to encourage further job growth in this expanding industry. You don't have to walk much farther than a block from this building to see television series and motion pictures being filmed. That is good news, because you see a lot of people working, and we're very pleased about that.

Last November, the Minister of Finance announced at the Ontario reception at the International Development Research Council Congress in San Diego that the government will be introducing tax measures to provide support for foreign-based film and television productions in Ontario. This significant incentive will help maintain and increase the level of production in Ontario.

Bill 15 implements the new refundable Ontario production services tax credit and the enhancements to the Ontario film and television tax credit announced this past November. The Ontario production services tax credit benefits corporations performing production services work in Ontario and is also available for domestic film and television productions that are not eligible for the Ontario film and television tax credit.

This government is acting to ensure that the province will remain the most attractive place in Canada for foreign films and television investment. Our action shows that we're committed to fostering a vibrant, world-class film and television industry in Ontario because that means more jobs for the people of Ontario.

I know the member for Scarborough-Ellesmere was a big proponent of these tax credits to encourage investment in the film and television industry here in Toronto, because she knows that her constituents are finding jobs in this industry, jobs which they can contribute to the Ontario economy and raise their families. That is indeed good news and I know many are very appreciative for those efforts that she made over the years.

There are also some amendments to the Highway Traffic Act in Bill 15. Everyone has a right to a sense of personal safety and to feel assured that their family is safe, and this includes when they're travelling on the roadways in our communities. To help increase safety on our roads, Bill 15 would amend the Highway Traffic Act to increase the minimum fine from \$60 to a minimum of \$150 for failing to obey a red or amber light.

We propose to raise the minimum fine for both amber light running and red light running. Raising the fine only for red light running would likely increase the number of drivers going to court claiming, in order to receive a lesser fine, that they only ran an amber light.

It's essential that drivers, rather than the vehicle owners, are held responsible for all moving traffic violations, including a red light. Direct identification of the driver means that demerit points can be assessed against the offender's driving record, leading to the potential loss of driving privileges and higher insurance rates.

This piece of legislation also amends the Highway Traffic Act for suspended drivers who drive. Despite the penalties for driving with a suspended licence, an estimated one third of suspended drivers continue to drive, and that, simply put, is unacceptable to us all. I think that would be an issue with which we would find strong triparty agreement.

Under the old system, drivers who drive while their licences were suspended all faced the same penalties, with no distinction for the reason for that suspension. Bill 15 would amend the Highway Traffic Act to create a separate offence for driving with a licence that is suspended for a Criminal Code conviction. This includes drinking and driving offences.

In my constituency there is a terrific amount of concern about the issue of drinking and driving. We in my community want a zero tolerance policy taken for that measure and appreciate the support of all political parties in Ontario in passing some of the toughest drunk-driving legislation in North America last year. The amendments to the Highway Traffic Act build on that success.

There are a good number of committed volunteers in my constituency who worked extremely hard on these issues and putting them on the public agenda, whether it's Susan McNab or whether it's Colleen Mackenzie, the president of the local MADD chapter, or Marjorie LeBreton, all three of whom I've had the opportunity to work with on combating drunk driving and towards promoting drunk-driving countermeasures, particularly on education, where we have had the opportunity to visit Sir Robert Borden High School, where student Jonathan Ritter organized two assemblies of 400 or 500 students. We were able to make presentations to those young people and to hear the experiences of family members who have lost loved ones, to have representations from the police and indeed from fellow students. That is a very important part. I think education plays an important role in fighting drunk driving, but perhaps no area is more important than educating young people at the time that they would be getting their first driver's licence.

These drivers have proven themselves to be a threat to the safety and lives of others on Ontario roads. With the changes contained in Bill 15, these drivers will face significantly higher penalties. This is part of the government's overall strategy to reduce drinking and driving and to remove the worst drivers from our roads. The fine for a first offence would be increased from the

\$500-to-\$5,000 range to the \$5,000-to-\$25,000 range, plus extending the suspension by six months. Fines for subsequent offences would be increased from the \$1,000-to-\$5,000 range to the \$10,000-to-\$50,000 range, plus six months' extended suspension, plus six months' potential imprisonment. That emphasizes the extremely serious nature of drunk driving and how we in Ontario treat drunk drivers.

The government is doing more than simply increasing penalties. The Ministry of Transportation has introduced a vehicle seizure program. Vehicles being driven by drivers suspended for a Criminal Code conviction shall be immediately impounded at the roadside, and the vehicle owner will be responsible for all costs related to the impoundment. The vehicle will be impounded for 45, 90 or 180 days, depending on the number of vehicle impoundments registered against the owners. That is again trying to target the repeat offenders. I know that issue had a terrific amount of support both from the minister, the member for Mississauga South, and the then Minister of Transportation, Mr Palladini, and we are pleased to see those measures contained in Bill 15 to help follow through on those initiatives.

The reasons for non-Criminal Code licence suspension can include, for the record, failure to pay fines, demerit point accumulation and medical conditions. The minimum fines for driving while suspended for non-Criminal Code convictions have been doubled so that the range for the first offence will be in the \$1,000-to-\$5,000 range.

There are measures contained in the budget for the land transfer tax rebate extension. Low interest rates make mortgage payments quite affordable to many people, but first-time buyers often have difficulty coming up with the necessary down payment. This is certainly the case in my constituency, where a lot of young families have the goal and the dream of owning their first home. For many of them the cost of the land transfer tax represents a large share of the down payment that they would need to make, and eliminating the land transfer tax enables them to buy a home sooner than they otherwise would have been able to.

As well, this is a highly competitive market, and in spite of the recent increase in demand, the housing industry is still operating well below capacity. The land transfer tax refund has been a great incentive for first-time home buyers and has helped support new housing activity. This refund is working well, helping young families to buy their first house and supporting jobs in the housing industry.

Since the introduction of this program in the May 1996 budget, we have provided \$33 million in land transfer tax refunds. We have helped more than 26,000 people, most of them young families, to buy their first home. In April we announced that we were extending the land transfer tax refund for another year, to March 31, 1999. Bill 15 implements this extension to make a home purchase more affordable for Ontarians. The land transfer tax refund applies to first-time buyers of newly built homes. The amount of the refund is the entire amount of tax paid or

payable up to a maximum of \$1,725. To date, the average refund is \$1,200.

I know the member for Cochrane South is a big supporter of the land transfer tax rebate for first-time home buyers buying new homes because he too understands the disincentive that tax is to young people trying to buy their first home.

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Bill 15 also contains some changes to the Ontario Loan Act. Ontario will meet its target to balance the budget in the year 2000-2001. I'm very proud and privileged to stand here today and say that we have met every single deficit reduction target we've made in the last three years. That is welcome news. I know our colleagues in the New Democratic Party were in somewhat of an awkward position. They were elected the government and read with great fanfare the announcement of a \$78-million surplus. Some 21 days later, when Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard, the cupboard was bare.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): First it was \$400 million, then it was \$4 billion.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Algoma, you don't have the floor.

Mr Baird: Poor Floyd Laughren, the then Treasurer, not long after he arrived at the Frost Building South discovered a \$400-million deficit. Then it grew to a \$4-billion deficit. So I think it is most unfair to blame the New Democratic Party for taking Ontario from a balanced budget to an \$11-billion deficit. In fact, they took it from the \$4-billion Ontario Liberal Party deficit. I believe, and the member from Algoma will correct me if I'm wrong, that deficit was the highest deficit in the provincial treasury's history, a \$4-billion deficit at the time.

Mr Wildman: That's right but we didn't want to leave them that record.

The Acting Speaker: This is not questions and comments.

Mr Baird: That is indeed a difficult thing.

The good news is that the deficit is falling as more jobs are created. That is indeed good news. The act authorizes the government to meet its financial obligations in terms of dealing with the accumulated debt. We know we're spending taxpayers' money and not ours, but we're accountable for every dollar we spend. I'm very pleased to say that there is not a doubt in my mind that this government will meet its deficit reduction targets this year and next. That will be good news, because the public said deficit reduction was a major priority. But it was not more important than job creation. We couldn't ask the unemployed to simply wait until we balanced the budget, so we're doing job creation and deficit reduction at the same time. That is indeed good news.

Mr Gerretsen: And you complain about people having it both ways.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr Baird: There's also some amendments to the Ontario Lottery Corporation Act. Bill 15 expands the purposes that the Ontario Lottery Corporation profits can

be used to fund. It will expand the list of purposes to include the provision of health care, the activities and objectives of charities and non-profit corporations, and the funding of community activities and programs. Under Bill 15, all provincial proceeds from slot machines and half of the net revenue from table games will be dedicated to support health care, including the operation of hospitals, funding to charities and not-for-profits, communities, and the Trillium Foundation. That is good news.

There are changes to the retail sales tax in this bill with respect to border collection. That is good news. There is a whole host of changes to the retail sales tax.

But this government recognizes that there's got to be priorities. This bill will allow the government to meet its financial obligations, particularly with respect to health care. I know, and the government members will know, that the provincial government has increased the health care budget this year to \$18.5 billion. That will allow the government to spend \$1.2 billion over the next number of years to build and have constructed more than 20,000 long-term-care beds. I know that's an extremely important issue in my community, where if we can get more long-term-care beds, like the Villa Marconi project, perhaps expanding such excellent facilities as the Starwood (Extendicare), we can get more long-term patients out of the hospitals and clean up the emergency ward situation at the Queensway-Carleton Hospital. That will be extremely important. We are sad to see that the president of the Queensway-Carleton Hospital, Rob Devit, will be leaving the hospital and heading to Peterborough. We wish him well in that.

The bill will also allow us to meet some education announcements. School construction is a big issue in my constituency, as I know it is in the constituencies of a number of my colleagues. John McCrae secondary school and Mother Teresa secondary school are now under construction in the growing community of Barrhaven. That is indeed good news. Folks like Norm MacDonald and Frank St Denis are working with the community on that very worthwhile initiative.

Bill 15 will also ensure that we can meet new priorities. In the pre-budget consultations, we heard from the Canadian Advanced Technology Association, from Shirley-Ann George, the executive director, and later I spoke with John Kelly, the chairman, who's also the president of JetForm. They made an exceptionally strong case that those of us from Silicon Valley North know only too well. They were able to make an excellent presentation to the government with respect to high-tech skills training, that we had to double the number of computer science positions, we had to double the number of computer and electrical engineering positions in the province, in terms of the education system.

This year the Ontario government announced \$150 million to be spent over the next three years to do just that, to ensure that we can fill those jobs when they are needed. That is something that has been fought for for a very long time and will assist not just the western end of the Ottawa-Carleton region, Nepean and Kanata, with job creation, it

will also do a lot in the greater Toronto area and in Kitchener-Waterloo and the Cambridge area as well. That's very good news.

I'm very pleased to have had the opportunity to speak to this important piece of legislation. I look forward to hearing the remarks of my colleagues the members for Halton Centre and Northumberland.

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): I'm very pleased to speak in support of Bill 15. Once passed, this bill will implement key measures in the 1998 budget to cut taxes, to create even more jobs in our growing economy.

The government promised the people of Ontario a 30% tax cut, and as a result of the first four steps, over three years the economy has performed even better than expected, almost double that of the other nine provinces. Bill 15 proposes to accelerate the final phase of the personal income tax cut to July 1, 1998, half a year ahead of schedule. It's going to be a great summer and a great future.

Bill 15 would cut the small business corporations tax rate in half, to 4.75%, the lowest rate in Canada, over eight years. Small businesses are the people who create over 80% of the new jobs in our economy, and will create even more with our support. Under this legislation, the tax rate on eligible small business income would be reduced from 9.5% to 9% immediately and would be reduced each year thereafter until 2006, when it would be one half the current rate. This tax cut will help more than 90,000 small business people continue to grow our economy and create jobs in this province, and create a brighter future for all of us.

Bill 15, once approved by this Legislature, would implement the land transfer tax refund extension for another year, to March 31, 1999. This tax cut has been a great incentive for first-time home buyers, and has helped support new housing activity, which is at its highest rate in years. Our government is extending this refund because it's doing what it was supposed to do: It's helping young families buy their first house. It has helped create 26,000 new jobs in the construction industry since 1997, and also many more jobs in related industries: carpet, paint, paper, plumbing, concrete, tools and other building materials.

Since we introduced this program in the May 1996 budget, we have provided \$33 million in land transfer tax refunds, helping more than 26,000 people, most of them young families, buy their first home. That's \$33 million that young families could spend on furniture, appliances, clothes or perhaps a made-in-Oakville Ford Windstar.

This government is very committed to making our communities safer. Bill 15 would help increase safety on our roads by proposing to more than double the fines for running red lights. We have to get the attention of all drivers to reduce this dangerous practice.

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It was just a little more than two years ago that our government's first budget was introduced. The Minister of Finance declared the 1996 budget one of hope and opportunity. It was about cutting taxes to create jobs. It was about leaving more money in the hands of hard-

working Ontarians, who had endured 65 tax increases in the previous decade. It's their money, for their priorities, in their hands. It was about reducing the cost and the size of government. It was about spending taxpayers' dollars more wisely, better services for less, better management of our resources. It was about building a brighter future for ourselves and our families. Cutting taxes was a key part of that plan to achieve these goals.

The Minister of Finance said in his 1996 budget speech, "The tax cuts I am announcing today will prove a simple truth: The best job creation program is a tax cut for every single Ontario taxpayer."

Some people didn't think our plan would work. Perhaps they even hoped it wouldn't work, because if our plan succeeded, it would prove how far off their policies had taken Ontario; and so they had.

In our first two budgets, we cut taxes a total of 30 times, we cut spending and reduced the size of government and we consistently overachieved in our deficit targets, because we took in more revenue. More people were working and paying taxes. Instead of fighting over the pie and who gets the biggest piece of the pie, we've made the pie bigger.

Today, only two years after our first budget, we are witnessing the greatest turnaround in this province's history. As we said then and I'm saying now, the best job creation program is a tax cut for every Ontario taxpayer. The numbers speak for themselves. The Ontario economy created 265,000 net new private sector jobs from February 1997 to February 1998. This is the biggest 12-month job gain ever in Ontario's history, 265,000 people who told their family at the end of the day, "I got the job." In the first quarter of this year, the Ontario economy created jobs at a rate unequalled in the past 15 years. In April alone Ontario gained another 22,500 jobs. And 1998 promises to be one of the best years in Ontario's history for job creation. Thousands more of our neighbours, friends and family members will share in this new job growth.

As you've seen, there are more job-creating measures in this budget. We are on target to balance the budget. Last year's deficit will be \$5.2 billion. This represents a reduction of almost \$1.4 billion from the \$6.6-billion target set out in the 1997 budget. The deficit for this year will be \$4.2 billion, \$600 million lower than the deficit target for this year set out in the balanced budget plan. Our balanced budget plan will ensure that the deficit is eliminated by the year 2000-2001. What a great way to start the new millennium, by telling the world that Ontario pays its bills on time, every year.

In the 1996 budget, the Minister of Finance said we are investing "in programs that are a priority for Ontarians such as health care, classroom education and community safety." We vowed to maintain and enhance services that Ontarians value.

The 1998 budget continues to invest in priority programs. We're investing in jobs for the future today. We're emphasizing work, not welfare. Since June 1995, the welfare caseload has gone down by nearly 20%. More

than a quarter of a million people are no longer dependent on welfare.

We're putting more money into health care. We're putting more money into educating our children in the classroom. We're putting more money into measures that enhance the safety of our communities.

The tax cuts in Bill 15 don't just create opportunities, they ensure a quality of life that allows all Ontarians to take advantage of these opportunities today and in the future.

Ontario's economic future has never been brighter. We are poised to enter the 21st century with renewed confidence and optimism.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's certainly a pleasure for me to be able to rise and speak on this very special budget bill, Bill 15, which is, in the first part, going to reduce the income tax rate further, from 45% to 42.75% of the basic federal rate in the current year, 1998, and also moving it further down the following year to 40.5% of the basic federal rate for the year 1999.

It's good news that we're able to arrive to this 30% cut in the provincial income tax, bringing it up a bit early, to July 1, 1998. I know that's very upsetting to the opposition, but it's good news for the people of Ontario. I'm pretty pleased and proud to be a Conservative and to be part of a government that's able to take drastic measures such as this and make it fly, at the same time creating jobs and getting people off welfare.

Of course with this bill there's also an adjustment for the Fair Share health care levy, and that's being reflected similarly to the income tax rate. It's interesting to note in our income tax return how the federal Liberals tried to mislead what we were doing with the Fair Share health tax. They rolled it all into a surtax that was already there and tried to call it a Fair Share health tax and mislead the public. Typical, I guess, of a Liberal, but it's most unfortunate because people actually believe we're charging that much as a Fair Share health tax when in fact it was already there from previous governments as a surtax on their income tax.

In part II we're recognizing the Corporations Tax Act and giving deductions to small business. Where have all the jobs been created? It's been in small business, a tremendous number of jobs created in the businesses that have five, six, seven employees. As they pick up one or two, that means a 10%, 20%, 30% increase in the employment in that particular business and in that community.

What are we doing to help them with that deduction? We're moving that corporation tax from 9.5% down to 9% this year, and then on January 1 every year we're moving it down 0.5% until we get it down to 4.75% on January 1, 2006. That's really looking ahead and having a vision to the future.

In this particular part of the bill, we're looking at things like the Ontario film and TV tax credit. As mentioned by the member for Nepean, there is a tremendous amount of film production right here in the city of Toronto and in Ontario in general. It's just great to see that kind of business mushrooming and booming in this country.

Of course there's also the Ontario book publishing tax credit, there's the Ontario computer animation and special effects tax credit, there's also the Ontario new technology tax incentive and a small business investment tax credit available to financial institutions.

I've been wondering over the last few months just how wrong the opposition can be. I can't believe they can consistently be so wrong. They've been saying we're wrong about the tax cuts, and they were certainly wrong. They were wrong about their ideas on what we were doing with welfare reform. It's worked extremely well. They were wrong about our reform for education, they were wrong about our ideas on a unified Toronto and they were wrong about the future of this great province. You would think they would soon start to see how things are happening and where they're flowing from and where they're flowing to.

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One of the troubles with the opposition is that they really don't know what they want and they're not going to be happy until they finally get it. They're against tax cuts. I have to admit I was a little shaky when I first looked at this 30% tax cut, and I'll talk a little more about that later. But certainly, as a result of the tax cut there's just no question Ontario is on the rebound. It's so simple.

I received a letter from a young man from Kingston in grade 10 —listen, member for Kingston and The Islands, from your riding. He understood what's going on. He said his mother's a teacher and didn't quite agree, but he understood how the tax cuts work:

"Tax cuts" — it's right in his letter, he wrote it himself — "put more money into people's pockets."

Mr Gerretsen: We all know how that works: The rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member for Kingston and The Islands, you don't have the floor yet.

Mr Galt: "When you have more money in your pocket, you spend more money, you invest more; and when you invest more and spend more, that creates jobs for other people."

When you have jobs for other people, that stimulates the economy, you end up with more taxes coming in, more revenue. What happens? From the fiscal year 1994 to fiscal 1995 to the past year, what happened to the revenue? It increased by \$6 billion. That's all in taxes and you're saying the tax cut created harm. No, the tax cut stimulated the economy, and the result of stimulating that economy has brought in all kinds of tax revenues, up to \$16 billion per year.

The opposition keeps saying it's not going to work. The NDP, the third party, says there were recessionary times when they were in government. Maybe they were, but what was happening to the rest of Canada? Over 400,000 net new jobs were created in that five-year period in Canada. What happened in Ontario? Minus 10,000 net new jobs. What was the problem with Canada? Ontario in that five-year period was like an anchor dragging Canada down. What's happened from 1995 to 1998? We've created approximately 350,000 net new jobs right here in

Ontario. Two thirds of the net new jobs across Canada were created in Ontario.

What's going on in BC, out on Canada's left coast?

Mr Baird: It's down the drain.

Mr Galt: Down the drain. Increased taxes. Something like 20%, 30% of the businesses in BC want to move. There are actually more people flowing from BC into Alberta than going into BC in grand total from the US, from other provinces, from Hong Kong. They're leaving BC, the Canadian left coast, because they can't take it any more.

Interjection.

Mr Galt: Don't take my word for it. There are many other people who believe this very strongly.

Mr Wildman: It has nothing to do with the Asian situation, of course.

Mr Gerretsen: Nobody is doubting your word.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Algoma, member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Galt: Dr Sherry Cooper, for example, a vice-president with Nesbitt Burns, came before our standing committee on finance. Both your parties were there to hear her excellent presentation. She went on till I found it rather embarrassing about what a great job we were doing as government. I finally questioned her, and it's in Hansard. I said, "A lot of the opposition says it's all to do with the international economy, and probably some of it is, but in your opinion, how much has to do with the international economy, the low dollar, low interest, and how much has it to do with what this government is doing here in the province of Ontario?" She took off again.

Mr Baird: What did she say?

Mr Galt: She was extremely complimentary about this government. I finally interrupted her and I said, "Do you mean that the response to the economy in Ontario is more than 70% as a result of this government?" "Oh," she said, "far more than that." And you people are telling us that it has to do —

Interjection.

Mr Galt: I don't know. She's a PhD economist, as I understand, vice-president of Nesbitt Burns. Far be it for me to argue with her opinion.

Then you could talk to people from the Toronto-Dominion Bank and their economic forecasting. What did they say? "Ontario's the place to be." Wow. In their opinion, in their prediction, we're second only to Newfoundland in economic growth in this coming year.

We've had spectacular growth in this province and it's understandable why we have. Of course, there's the low dollar, but with the tax cuts that we're talking about here in Bill 15, the corporate taxes and the income taxes, there have been tremendous employment gains. Thank heavens that the Liberals have talked a lot about this lowering of the personal income tax, because the federal Liberals with their payroll tax increases have almost nullified what we've given back, our 30% tax cut.

Mr Gerretsen: Well, then, how would your action end that?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, I don't want to have to repeat it again.

Mr Galt: If it wasn't for you people talking it up, the public out there might never know about the tax cuts that we've made. Certainly the federal Liberals have really tried to nullify any of the cuts that we've made for the public here in Ontario. I can tell you, it's been quite an anchor —

Mr Wildman: If you really think about it, this is a bit of a contradictory argument. If it's been nullified, how can it do any good?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Please take your seat. The members for Algoma, Kingston and The Islands, Prescott and Russell, please remain quiet. You'll have the opportunity shortly with questions and comments. Voice your opinion loudly at that time.

Mr Wildman: Speaker, I would apologize. I was provoked.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for getting a little control here in the House. They weren't hearing my remarks and that's most unfortunate.

Moving right along to the Royal Bank economic analysis, their comment was, "Ontario's economic outlook is rosy." How much nicer could you have than, "Ontario's economic outlook is rosy"? They predict that next year we'll have a GDP of some 3.7%. That's following a year of 4% and 4%-plus. They're recognizing things like housing starts, up some 26%. They're recognizing the tremendous demand for domestic cars. Consumer goods are up.

I'm sure when you go to the shopping centres around Kingston you find the parking lots full of cars. That's because people are in spending their money from the tax cut that they've received, whether it's from the corporate tax cut or the income tax cut. I know it's most distressing for you to go to a shopping centre and you can't find a place to park. Go park way in the back and walk in and you'll recognize that the retailers are doing very well.

Moving right along, there is the Bank of Montreal and their employment analysis. They expect the jobless rate in Ontario to really drop, and it's already dropped tremendously. They claim there's been, as was mentioned just a little earlier, some 265,000 net new jobs in this last 12 months.

Mr John L. Parker (York East): How much?

Mr Galt: Some 265,000, a historical record, never happened before in Ontario and certainly wouldn't have happened in that period 1990-95. They're expecting employment growth to continue at some 2% into this coming year.

I want to recognize the official opposition. They have been right. The Liberals have been right, especially if you look down in Quebec. The Liberals there recognized the difficulty of getting a good leader, so what did they do? They went to the Tory ranks and got Jean Charest. There wasn't a single Liberal in Quebec or a single Liberal across Canada who could go and do a decent job.

Mr Wildman: So did the PQ. The PQ did as well.

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat.

Mr Galt: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I was just explaining how right the Liberals had been in getting Jean Charest as the leader, because he's going to do a tremendous job on Canadian unity. There's no question that's going to happen.

Then out in Alberta, what happened there? They couldn't find a decent Liberal to lead their party so Nancy MacBeth, who lost out to Klein, has gone over to the Liberal side to become the leader of the Liberals.

Mr Wildman: The two of you are the same.

Mr Galt: I'm sure with the difficulties you're having with your leader — and really he's a nice guy, but he's trying to be everything —

The Acting Speaker: Order. I just want to remind you which bill we're debating, and you'll debate that bill, won't you, please?

Mr Galt: It's Bill 15, Mr Speaker, and that's just what I was getting around to explain. The Liberal leader is trying to be all things to all people, and that's just not working out very well. But I'll stick to the topic, Mr Speaker. I know that you're a good Speaker and really look after that. I guess it got a little touchy when I started talking about the Liberal leader here in this House.

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One of the greatest measures we have in terms of what's going on in the taxes and what it's costing our economy relates to tax freedom day, as it's calculated out. By the way, the premise of tax freedom day is that if you paid all your taxes up front, by the time you get to that date, you've got your taxes paid and from there on you can put it in your own pocket. Back in 1985 it was May 25. Then you could start earning something for yourself. By 1990, it had moved to June 21. Now you can understand why they'd be called the tax-and-spend Liberals. Then, in the following five years, 1990 to 1995, it moved from June 21 to June 26. That was because the NDP were borrowing so much money. They didn't bother to increase the taxes, so they doubled the debt, and that's why we ended up where we are. It only moved up some five days from June 21 to June 26.

When we first talked, as a party, about a 30% income tax cut, to be very honest, I looked at it and wondered: "Wow. How is this going to work out? Will this really fly?" I met two economists I'd never met before. I was out knocking on doors. They were in two different locations, very different places in my riding. They invited me in and we talked about the Laffer curve, which I'd never heard about before. It was very refreshing to have them explain how this was going to work. They were so enthused about the Laffer curve and how it affected taxes.

Basically, it gets to the point that when you go over the top, as you add more taxes, you really reduce jobs; it has this tremendous affect on jobs. As you cut taxes, it increases jobs; it stimulates the economy. That is exactly what we've seen in Ontario. These two economists — I met them about three weeks apart — walked through this Laffer curve. It's been fun over the last three years to

follow just how that has fallen in place and how it's really been very, very effective and has worked very well.

This budget and Bill 15 is all about jobs. Jobs are up; taxes are down. It has happened in so many other jurisdictions and across this province.

High taxes, such as the income tax and the corporate tax that we're getting reduced in Bill 15 — the higher taxes go, the more it drives an underground economy. If you go back to the early 1960s, it was estimated that the underground economy in Ontario was about 5%. In 1995 or thereabouts, it was estimated to have tripled to 15%. When the underground economy triples like that, not only are you losing income tax but PST, GST and umpteen other taxes. That really is all about tax leakage.

What does the federal government do when they start to realize that? "Oh, we won't get at and straighten out the root problem. We'll clamp down. We'll send out more inspectors, we'll send out more tax police. We'll attack the public to force them to pay." They should be looking at the root problem of high taxes and waste and re-evaluate that.

I've mentioned before in the House that when Puerto Rico back in 1987 dropped their rate from a horrendous 67.6% to 41%, an incredible thing happened. In one year, there was a total turnaround in tax revenues. It increased by 28%; 50% more income was declared and the number of registered taxpayers increased by 30%. Obviously, in that culture, as in ours, people really do want to pay their fair share. They don't want to rip off the government; they don't want to rip off their neighbours on the left or on the right or across the street; they want to pay their fair amount.

As we talk about reduction of income tax and corporate taxes, one of the greatest tax grabs we have in this country is the federal government's Canada pension plan moving from some 5.6% up to 9.9%, a 73% increase in that payroll tax alone, while we're trying to get rid of the employer health tax and some of the other payroll taxes. Then, to top that off, the federal government doesn't play fair towards the rest of the country with its employees. They roll that all in with their pension donations and they don't have to increase their payments; they just recognize that, oh well, they'll take \$20 million less going into the pension fund.

Ontario has absolutely led the way in showing that tax cuts can indeed create jobs. That's what this budget was all about, and it's also about getting people off welfare. It's about so many good things: a strong economy that has been stimulated by these tax cuts, stimulating jobs and growth. It's about educating our children for the future. The budget really emphasized work, not welfare, and it's good news that we're going to move further with Ontario Works and the workfare program. There's lots of good news in that budget.

We stimulated the economy to have more dollars to spend in health care, moving up some \$300 million more in health care than we had anticipated being able to spend, moving it from \$18.2 billion to \$18.5 billion. I'm sure you'll recall that our commitment at campaign time was

that there would be no reduction in health care, which at that time was at \$17.4 billion; so this year, as you can see if you do the math, we're up in health care by \$1.1 billion. Some of the savings in health care, as came out in the budget — \$1.2 billion we'll be spending on long-term-care beds. Many dollars have been saved from the restructuring of hospitals, which has been very painful in many ridings, including my own, but from those dollars we're reinvesting in kidney dialysis and bypass surgery and MRIs — the list just goes on and on, for about 20 of those different activities.

We're reinvesting in things like personal safety, looking at helping children on low incomes. This budget has been truly a good-news budget for the people of Ontario, one that will go down in the history of this province as really boosting the province.

We've come through the tough times of getting the deficit under control. We haven't killed it yet, haven't got it to zero, but the main reason for not eliminating it as quickly as we could, in three or four years, is that we want an economy that's sustainable. Yes, it could have been brought down very quickly. It would have been very painful. People on the other side of the House would have yelled and screamed and carried on if it had come down that quickly, and it was possible.

But the way we're going about it — working it down, reinvesting where it should be reinvested, stimulating jobs, cutting taxes — we're ending up with a sustainable economy that is going to carry us well into the next century. It's going to help our young people find work and employment, and I'm sure all members of this House agree that there's nothing more important than to see our young people coming out of university or secondary school and having jobs when they graduate. It was very disappointing over the 10 lost years, from 1985 to 1995, when so many jobs went down the drain.

It's interesting to note that back in the late 1980s, just before the Premier of the day, Peterson, called an election, they were bragging that they had balanced the budget and actually had a few dollars to the good. But lo and behold, what did the third party, the NDP, find when it came into government? They had juggled the books, moved hundreds of millions of dollars around to try and arrange it so it looked like they had balanced the budget when in fact the budget really had not been balanced.

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Then we had the NDP come into government, and what did they do? They kept two sets of books, one for the public and one for themselves. It was quite misleading to the public to see what was going on with these two sets of books. It was things like taking \$60 million from the northern heritage fund and just spending it. I don't know what they spent it on, but at least it has now been replaced. There's at least a reserve in the northern heritage fund of some \$60 million, where it should be, rightly so. It's most unfortunate that you would strip that from your own people in the north.

All in all, it's been a very good budget. It's unfortunate that the opposition are as upset as they are with this good-

news budget, but it's certainly going to go down in our history as a budget that really brought Ontario forward and did a tremendous amount for the economy of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Gerretsen: I find it interesting that the member went on for quite a long time trying to attribute how well the economy is doing to the tax cut, but then suddenly slammed the federal Liberals, saying that whatever tax cut was given in Ontario was taxed back by the federal government. If that is so, it's a neutral thing. How, then, can your tax cut be the reason the economy is doing better in Ontario?

Let me tell you what Bank of Montreal economist Tim O'Neill says: "We've been consistent about this from the beginning" — he's talking about income tax cuts in the provincial budget — "both at the federal and provincial levels. Eliminate the deficit first. If the economy is doing fairly well, that's the time you get rid of the deficit."

What these Tories just don't understand is that during their three years in office, the public debt of this province has gone from \$89 billion to \$105 billion, a \$16-billion increase. According to your own budget document, the amount we spent in servicing the public debt, in other words, to pay the interest on the debt, has gone from \$7.4 billion a year to over \$9 billion a year. We are spending more on interest on the public debt in this province than we are on all the social services you're involved in.

So what you're saying just doesn't make any sense. Yes, I want Ontario the place to be and I certainly want the economy to be rosy, but I would like it to be rosy and the place to be for everyone. Through your cuts to a lot of the social services and health care services, you have completely cut out a significant portion of the Ontario people.

Mr Wildman: I came to this debate tonight to listen to it to determine how I might vote on this bill. I was very interested in listening. I heard the member for Nepean, the member for Halton Centre and the member for Northumberland, and frankly I think they may have turned me against the bill, particularly the member for Northumberland. That was the most vacuous, self-congratulatory, contradictory piece of puffery I've ever heard.

The member went on at great length, as my friend from Kingston and The Islands pointed out, about the changes in income tax, that the lowering of the income tax rate has produced jobs in Ontario. Then, after saying that, he attacked the federal government for a surtax which has, he said, largely neutralized the provincial tax changes.

Think about that argument: If it had been neutral, they couldn't have been produced any particular changes in the economy. I don't know whether he's right or not, but if his argument is that the federal government has increased taxes so that there's no difference in how many dollars an individual has to pay, then it doesn't make any difference. His argument about more money being in people's pockets for them to spend and produce jobs doesn't work, because the money isn't in their pockets and they can't spend it, so there are no jobs. It's completely contradictory. It doesn't make any sense. The member obviously wasn't listening

to his own speech or he wouldn't have made such contradictory comments that make absolutely no sense.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I'm pleased to comment on the speeches by the members for Nepean, Halton Centre and Northumberland. I think the three of them did an outstanding job in addressing the issues contained in Bill 15.

If you look at Bill 15, its short title tells you what this bill is all about: the Tax Cuts for People and for Small Business Act, 1998. That's what this bill is all about and that's what the budget is all about, where we've seen tax cuts that have benefited small businesses and individuals in this province.

I know the member for Halton Centre would have wanted to comment on this, but he shared his time with the other members. Part of Bill 15 deals with removing the retail sales tax from 1-877 toll-free services, the phone exchanges for call centres. If you look at the fact that we had the 1-800 service and then the 1-888 service —

Mr Gerretsen: There's something that's really meaningful.

Mr Newman: The member for Kingston and The Islands says it's really meaningful. He's right, because this is a growth industry in this province, something he may not know about. Jobs are coming into this province through call centres. We've already used up the 1-888 toll-free lines. Now we're into the 1-877 toll-free lines. These jobs were going to provinces like New Brunswick and other provinces in this country, but now the jobs are coming to Ontario because we're cutting taxes to create jobs. This is just one example I wanted to point out to everyone that's having a positive effect on our economy.

The bill also deals with the land transfer tax and the fact that the land transfer tax rebate has been extended to first-time purchasers of newly constructed homes, for the third year. It's extended to March 31, 1999. This is very positive news for first-time home buyers, because that \$1,725 reduction is after-tax dollars. That too is having a positive effect on our economy.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): I'm really disappointed to hear the member for Northumberland talk the way he did about the economy and the deficit. Only one government in the last three decades balanced the budget, and that was the Liberal government, in 1989. It seems you don't even believe your Minister of Finance. It's right in there. It's printed in black and white. The member for Northumberland probably hasn't read that book.

If we had not gone ahead with the reduction of personal income tax, there would be no more deficit. We could inject more money into health care. At present, we're cutting health care, even though you're saying there will be \$1.2 billion over the next eight years. I'm anxious to see it, member for Northumberland.

When we left government, the Liberal government only had a \$39-billion deficit. By the year 2000, the PCs are going to have a debt of nearly \$117 billion. If you hadn't gone through with those personal income tax cuts, we wouldn't be where we are today. It looks good: "We have

reduced the deficit." The deficit could be nil at the present time, but you haven't gone that route. You should have gone to an Ontario sales tax reduction instead, probably down to 6% instead of 8% or 7%.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean, now is the time to respond.

Mr Baird: I'm pleased to respond to the remarks by my colleagues the members for Kingston and The Islands, Algoma, Scarborough Centre and Prescott and Russell.

The member for Prescott and Russell just promised to cut taxes by \$2.8 billion and says we should have cut taxes by \$2.8 billion. It's just like the last election campaign, when Liberals went around the province promising to cut taxes by \$2 billion or \$3 billion, promising to cut taxes before the budget was balanced, and now they've changed their tune again. They've flip-flopped so many times. They promised to cut taxes by billions. They promised to fire 14,000 public servants.

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They promised work for welfare. They promised mandatory opportunity. They promised payroll tax cuts. They promised to repeal Bill 40. They promised to repeal the quota law. They promised to cut the number of school boards. But that was then and this is now.

Now we look at the real Dalton McGuinty agenda. He's been very clear. The first thing he wants to do is to scrap mandatory work for welfare, because he believes the old system was just fine. That's what Dalton McGuinty wants to do, one of the priorities he wants to do. If I'm wrong, stand up and correct the record. If Dalton McGuinty doesn't want to get rid of mandatory welfare, stand up and correct the record.

Interjection.

Mr Baird: "Turn-back-the-clock" McGuinty, my colleague says.

Now Gerard Kennedy — he's not the Liberal leader's right-hand man, he's his left-hand man — wants to increase welfare spending by 20% if a Liberal government is elected, the official spokesman for the Liberal Party. I hope they talk about that during the next election, because they've flipped so many times it's simply outrageous. Do they want to put quotas back? Do they want to bring Bill 40 back? Who knows? They flip-flop so often, we'll just have to wait and see.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nepean, I just want to tell you how fortunate you were because I let you speak. You were not supposed to. You already had the floor. That was my mistake.

Mr Baird: Two-minute response.

The Acting Speaker: No, you already had delivered a speech. There were three of you who divided the time, so it was not your turn to speak. So you were lucky.

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: My understanding is that you can split the time, the hour introductory speech can be split, without unanimous consent, and the standing orders explicitly allow for four two-minute responses. Then they allow one of the speakers to sum up with a two-minute response. If I'm wrong, we've been operating this place wrong for the last three years,

because that is exactly what has happened every single speech in this House. I stand to be corrected, sir.

The Acting Speaker: Let me assure you, that was not a response. You were responding to your own speech.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: No, no. The time was divided among three speakers, okay? You spoke, the member for Halton Centre spoke, and the member for Northumberland spoke. Then we go around for questions and comments, so you're responding to your own speech.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I know, but it should have been somebody else. I hope it's clear. Let's not have an argument. You had your turn. We'll discuss it later on. Bring it back later on.

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Every single speech that I've ever had, the speaker had two minutes to respond. There are four comments and then the original speaker has an opportunity to respond. I would seek your clarification on that because I think it's important before we go on.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nepean, you're right. I must tell you that what confused me was the fact that I thought you were the third one to the address the —

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Exactly. I made a mistake. I apologize. If it's the only thing that you can reproach me, I'm okay.

Further debate?

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I certainly can well understand your confusion in this regard, because although you were right in your final ruling, we all know that this all stems back from the draconian rule changes that were made by this government.

The Acting Speaker: No, no. That's not a point of order.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think all of us in this House would agree that you preside with dignity and aplomb, and one mistake once in a while is quite understandable.

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Your service in the chair has been exemplary, and once every 13 years everyone is entitled to a mistake.

Mr Gerretsen: On a further point of order, Mr Speaker: The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale asked for a public inquiry into the rule changes. I think this is a reasonable request, realizing full well that these rule changes are draconian. I would ask unanimous consent that an immediate public inquiry into the draconian rule changes that this House now operates under be immediately done and investigated. Agreed?

The Acting Speaker: The recess is now over. We will now continue with the debate. Further debate.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): After listening to the remarks here, I'm not sure if I'm responding to Groucho Marx or any of the other Marx brothers in their comments.

Certainly from the comments earlier, I thought I heard a challenge in terms of what our party would stand for, and of course I'm ready to start speaking about the McGuinty

report called First Steps: Report of the McGuinty Task Force on Children, but I'm sure you would correct me, Mr Speaker, that indeed we're supposed to be discussing Bill 15, which implements a number of measures contained in the 1998 budget. I do want to say, though, that there are alternatives to this government. We're very proud of the alternatives that we have, and on another occasion I'm sure I'll have the opportunity to speak to it.

Bill 15, of course, to implement measures contained in the 1998 budget tabled by the Minister of Finance on budget day, May 5, contains a number of items that some of the members have been commenting on. Of course we can't help but discuss the impact of the budget as this bill seeks to implement some of those measures.

The very first item in this bill, part I, talks about the Income Tax Act and this government's agenda in terms of reducing income taxes. When I look at the deficit that this government is bringing in, in 1997-98 the Ontario deficit will be \$5.2 billion, and the deficit for 1998-99 will be \$4.2 billion.

One therefore has to ask why, when we are in a deficit situation, this government continues on insisting upon an income tax cut. If we did not have these income tax cuts, we would have a balanced budget today. Quite frankly, the people of Ontario, when they were given a choice, as they were back in the last federal election — and of course we were coming to a situation where the budget would be balanced. So the question put to the people of Ontario was, "Should we incur or go into more income tax cuts, should we reduce the debt or should we repair the social infrastructure?" The voice of the people of Ontario was very clear in electing an overwhelming Liberal caucus to the federal Parliament: "Repair the social infrastructure." And indeed that is going to be our position going into the next provincial election.

Here we have a government that in introducing its income tax cut has incurred an additional cost of \$1.2 billion, followed by in 1997-98 an additional \$3.3 billion, and in this coming year \$4.7 billion, looking at \$5.6 billion. We know that every time they have introduced a cut to our income tax system here, it has cost us in borrowed money; every cent of that income tax cut has been financed by borrowed money. Indeed, we see a government that is continuing along its agenda, trying to find money, borrowing money not only from debt holders in this country and outside of this country, but as well having to go and seek funds from within a spending envelope to pay for this income tax cut.

So people are now hearing on one side that this government has cut some 36 taxes, but on the other side they're hearing that there are 35 hospitals that are going to be closed, \$800 million taken out of the health care spending envelope dealing with hospitals, closures of beds, layoff of nurses. Indeed, all of a sudden we read within the budget that there's going to be a task force to look at the nursing situation in Ontario after having laid off 7,000? It just boggles the mind.

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We are looking here at a bill that insists on cutting income tax. I heard the remarks over there about this

economist and that economist saying it does wonders for the economy. I'm sorry. I happened to be at one time in my existence a practising economist. I would go —

Interjections.

Mr Cullen: You can't suck and blow at the same time. You can't go and quote from economists and then, when you have an economist stand before you and speak to you, say, "Oh, we don't want to listen to that." It's amazing.

Let's take the nation's newspaper. Since Conrad Black doesn't have his newspaper up and running, of course, I'm referring to the *Globe and Mail*. The *Globe and Mail* had an excellent article dealing with the anticipation of this particular budget, talking to different economists. My colleague from Kingston and The Islands only referred to the Bank of Montreal economist, but let me tell you what economists are saying are the reasons behind Ontario's boom. Has it got anything to do, as the members on the government side opposite try to claim, with the income tax cut?

You have to think. You have to look at the issue. I was a private sector economist, and I would have to stand before my clients and present to them scenarios that we had to justify, that we had to show made sense, or else they would not buy our product. That's the private sector. That's the way it's supposed to work, and I have to tell you that our little economic consulting company, of which I was simply a member, has continued to exist all these years by providing sensible, accurate, well-researched documentation. So when I go, for example, to the Ottawa Economic Association and I sit among my peers and I ask them, "How is Ontario doing?" they say to me, "Ontario is pretty damned lucky."

Indeed, the *Globe and Mail* says it right here. What does the *Globe and Mail* say?

"Ontario's economy is booming, but there's little evidence the provincial government's much-trumpeted personal income tax cut has had much to do with it." This is the *Globe and Mail*, certainly not a rabid paper, certainly not a Liberal paper, you'd have to say. "Rather, many economists argue that low interest rates, a surging US economy and a low Canadian dollar are the main reasons for Ontario's stellar performance in creating new jobs."

It only makes sense that if on the one hand a government cuts income taxes but at the other end it cuts expenditures, it cuts services, it cuts jobs, then if indeed the economy is improving, which we all know it has, it cannot be as a result of the government's own actions.

Indeed, the members opposite, as my colleague from Kingston and The Islands acknowledged, have already acknowledged this when they say, "Isn't it too bad that their income tax cut was eaten up by the actions of the federal government?" Don't they wish today that they had the stellar budget performance that the federal government has? Why is it that the province of Mike the deficit-fighter is going to be among the last of the provinces in Canada in terms of dealing with its deficit?

Why is it that this government, which came in and said the New Democratic government created so much havoc

to the economy, ends up with the same bond rating from Bay Street as the Rae government? Why is it?

Quite frankly, it's because you cannot do two things at once here. It's an elemental law in economics. Those of you who have studied it know the Tinbergen law, that it takes one policy action to deal with one policy issue at a time, and a government that cuts income tax and tries to balance the budget at the same time obviously finds itself continuing in a deficit situation. If it hadn't been for those income tax cuts, we would not be borrowing today up to \$4.6 billion.

In Bill 15, Mr Speaker — I know you are concerned about staying on topic — we have here part V: "The bill enacts the Ontario Loan Act, 1998. That act authorizes the borrowing of up to \$4.6 billion, in total, for the Consolidated Revenue Fund." Why is this money needed? Because we continue to run a deficit. Why do we continue to run a deficit? Because we continue to cut taxes.

What happens to the average taxpayer out there in Mike Harris's Ontario? We just heard my colleague the member for Fort William in question period today talk about the average family earning over \$40,000, who would be a beneficiary of this income tax cut, having to pay out more in higher tuition fees for post-secondary education. She made the very telling point about the impact of this government's programs seeking to help, supposedly, the working parents, the middle-income parents of our province, but instead this government hits them time and time again by having other bodies do the dirty work of this government: cut the funding to universities, cut the funding to community colleges, release them from any restraint in terms of tuition fees. Tuition fees naturally go up. It is true there is a demand curve. Lo and behold, parents are paying more.

What is happening in municipalities as a result of this government's fiscal plan? This is one of the things that's missing from this bill and it's one of the things that's missing from this budget: any comment whatsoever about helping the poor property taxpayer, on whom this government has foisted over \$2 billion — I think it's nearer \$3 billion — in additional services, and yet it leaves them hanging with nearly \$600 million in additional costs.

Why does this government want \$600 million? It has to pay. It has to pay for its deficit. It has to pay for its income tax cut. So what happens? Municipalities are now stuck with the bill. Who is stuck with the bill? Didn't Mike Harris once say there was only one taxpayer?

What is happening out there in your communities? Why did members of your caucus vote against the downloading bill? Because they knew there would be an impact on your and my voters, the property taxpayers. What is that impact? In my community, we are seeing increases in user fees, we're seeing increases in wading-pool fees, in arena fees, hockey leagues. By the way, I do believe the toughest politics I know happen to be at the hockey-league level, but I'll leave that to another day.

You are a tourist who comes to one of the gems in Ontario for tourism; you come to the national capital. You have to park somewhere. What happens? Your parking

fees have gone up. What kind of message does this send out there? But the municipality says, "We have no choice whatsoever, because lo and behold, the provincial government has given us all these costs, and we have to go back and find this money." They have to take it out of user fees, and so they're doing so in parking arrangements. It is simply not sustainable.

What do the other economists say here? Let's quote some economists. My friend the member for Northumberland quoted some economists. Here we have Lise Bastarache, assistant chief economist at the Royal Bank of Canada, who said that low interest rates "are the number one element driving economic growth across Canada, including Ontario, and there is no way to distinguish whether the average Ontario consumer decided to spend more" because of an income tax cut or because of the low interest rate that he or she received courtesy of another government that balanced its books.

Let's remember that the federal government, a Liberal government, is three years ahead in terms of balancing its books, because it was sensible. It dealt with its spending prior to cutting income taxes. What are people in Ontario saying? "Get your fiscal house in order before you talk about income taxes." What is this government doing? It's going to have to borrow again. It's going to have to borrow to pay for a deficit this year of \$5.2 billion, next year of \$4.2 billion, and on it goes.

We heard so many times during the budget, "A promise made, a promise kept." I have to tell you, it is enough to make us all gag. People in Ontario in 1995, when they voted in that election, heard from this government that it would make government smaller. Well, all right; it kept that promise. But it also promised, we heard Mike Harris saying, that there would be not one cent cut from health care. What has happened? Eight hundred million dollars cut from annual hospital budgets, a total of \$1.4 billion since the Tories took office.

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We say that this budget is a hit-and-run budget. We say this because this budget continues the Harris government agenda of hitting health care, hitting education, hitting kids, and yet they're running for an election. That's what is going to happen.

This budget is so cynical in what it says in terms of health care, education and what it's doing for the honest taxpaying people in Ontario. What did this government say? What did Mike Harris say about hospital closures during the last election? What did he promise? Remember, this bill is implementing a budget where they said so many times, "A promise made, a promise kept."

The question was asked during the leaders' televised debate on Global TV, "Can you guarantee us tonight that your pledge to protect health care will mean that you will not close hospitals?" Mike Harris said, and the gentlemen and ladies opposite know this by heart by now, "Certainly I can guarantee you, Robert, that it is not my plan to close hospitals."

How do you think the people in Ontario are paying for these income tax cuts? How do you think the people of

Ontario are paying for the additional deficit that this government was pledged to eliminate but continues to run and will continue to run for the rest of its mandate? It's having to close hospitals, 35 of them.

This bill talks about implementing other measures contained in the 1998 budget but it is silent on the user fees that are happening out there in the community because of the fiscal actions this government has taken.

What did Mike Harris say in his Common Sense Revolution? Did he not say there was only one taxpayer? Did he not say that a user fee was a tax in another name? What did he say in the Common Sense Revolution? My colleagues opposite all know because they swore an oath to uphold that Common Sense Revolution. It's not making any sense for the common people in this province because he says, "Under this plan, there will be no new user fees."

This government directly, never mind what's happening in the municipalities, instituted \$225 million in new user fees for seniors and the poor who purchase medication through the Ontario drug benefit plan. I'm sorry, folks. You can't hide behind it. That's a user fee. A user fee is a user fee is a user fee.

I heard earlier that this budget contained elements to improve safety in our communities. I am totally amazed at the gall of this government. Recently, before I was elected to this House, I sat on the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton council and we put in place regionalized policing. We had a police budget of about \$100 million, of which \$8 million was being financed through grants by this government. So what did these folks opposite do? What did these law-and-order folks do? They eliminated the grant that helped keep property taxes down, that was used to hire police officers to patrol our community, to keep our community safe. They cut that out, and then this government has the gall to create a political crime commission to run around this province and say: "Crime is on the rampage. We must do something about it," and they table a budget that says they're going to do something about it.

My God. Why did they cut out the \$8 million from the Ottawa-Carleton police budget? Oh, excuse me. They have a deficit. They're deficit fighters. They need this money to fight the deficit; and they promised to cut income taxes, so they're cutting income taxes, and they had to take that money out of our community to pay for that income tax cut.

What do the people in Ottawa-Carleton say? Do they say, "Thank you very much, thank you for taking the money out, thank you for putting us in a crisis. Thank you for making us have to choose whether we have community police centres here"? You call the program as you like. The fact of the matter is that this has created a budget crisis in Ottawa-Carleton. They're having to choose between supplementary aid for the people who are most impoverished and maintaining the police force. Is this the kind of community we want to have? I'm sorry, I don't think so.

We heard this government still crowing very loud and clear just eight months ago that it was delivering the

promise, that it was delivering the agenda, and eight months ago the voters in Ottawa West dealt a very clear message from the second-oldest riding in Canada. We are second to Victoria, BC. These are the folks who would ordinarily support your party. They did for many years. They sent a resounding message — not simply a plurality, but a majority — and they said: “You cannot suck and blow at the same time. You cannot speak about fighting the deficit and giving us income tax while at the same time cutting our health care and our services.” This is nonsense.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Questions and comments?

Mr Wildman: I listened carefully to the member for Ottawa West. He started out by indicating that he was an economist. It reminded me of that old saying that it's such a dismal science. It also reminded me that one wag once said, “If you laid all the economists in the world out, it would be a good start.”

It seems to me that if you have more than —

Mr Cullen: Point of order, Mr Speaker: The actual statement is, “If you lay all the economists end to end, they would still not reach a conclusion.”

Mr Wildman: I was actually just going to get to that. I do like the one that it would be a good start. The fact is, if you get three economists in a room, you have 10 different opinions. The problem is that so much of the measures are subjective, and the conclusions that are arrived at are a matter of opinion.

Having said that, I appreciate the presentation from the member for Ottawa West with regard to his view that the government is increasing the deficit in order to finance the changes in the income tax, that the government is also cutting services — hospitals, schools and so on — in order to finance this change in the income tax. I share with him his view that if the government were serious about cutting the deficit, the government would do that before making these changes to the income tax.

I would say, though, that since the member shares with me the view that this is a wrongheaded approach, I hope that in his response he would make it clear what the Liberal Party would do about the income tax break that this government is imposing on the people of Ontario.

Mr Galt: I was very entertained by the member for Ottawa West as he made his presentation. On dramatics he'd get about a 5.8. On this side we were wondering, on his user fee, how much a user fee would be to go to a wading pool in Ottawa, particularly the city that receives the most dollars of any city in Canada for development, for museums etc from the federal government and the provincial government. A tremendous amount of money goes into the city of Ottawa. Something that Bob Rae once said is, “It doesn't matter how much you give them, they always want more.” With you coming up on council, I can understand why you just want more and more. There's never enough.

The member for Ottawa West also made reference to taxes and recessions, the tax cut, the deficit, the budget and all that. Let me remind you how the taxes went up in the late 1980s. What did we have in 1990? A recession. That was in Ontario. What happened in BC? They were

doing quite well, thank you very much, in the early 1990s. Their taxes went up under an NDP government, a socialist government, in the early 1990s. Where are they today? Into a recession. There's a direct relationship between higher taxes and ending up with recessionary times.

Let me tell you about the US, the 10 highest-taxed states versus the 10 lowest-taxed states. The economic recovery of the 10 lowest-taxed states through the 1980s went up 20% faster than the 10 highest-taxed states. Also, a thousand people a day moved into the lower-taxed states and a thousand people a day moved out of the higher-taxed states. There's just no question what happens to people, what happens to industry, what happens to jobs when taxes are too high. They leave the country, just as is happening in BC today.

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Mr Lalonde: I want to commend my colleague from Ottawa West. I could see that he has very deeply studied Bill 15, and he touched on some very important points. As our leader Dalton McGuinty says, it's a hit-and-run budget, and everything is reflected in this budget. It's hit-and-run because all the way through the Conservative people have been chopping down all the programs, cuts in education, cuts in health care and also downloading to the municipalities.

User fees, definitely: There won't be enough people who will be able to participate in the local municipalities' activities because of the user fees the municipality has to come out with. Only so many people will be able to afford them, so there won't be any programs in place because of the user fees the municipality will have to put in place due to the downloading.

But there's one thing we shouldn't forget. After the election in 1995, I walked into a shopping centre, and this gentleman came up to me and said, “There's one reason I voted for the Conservatives, because of the tax cuts.” I saw him a couple of weeks ago. He says, “Where is my tax cut?” They were all expecting a 30% tax cut. The way you people did the publicity, they thought it was a 30% decrease in their taxes. Really, if it were like they do at consumer and corporate affairs, this government would be taken to court.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to congratulate the member for Ottawa West for his speech, well delivered and very timely and appropriate, given the devastation that is beginning to happen out there that is more than obvious to anybody in Ontario today who has a social conscience.

You will hear the government, over the next few days as they debate these bills on the budget, tell you that all the indicators are showing that Ontario is booming, that things are well and that the economy is strong. But they will not tell you about some of what is really happening out there in Ontario because of the policies of this government.

Deteriorating infrastructure: Our infrastructure has actually attracted investment to Ontario over the years, has made Ontario one of the most attractive jurisdictions in the world to come to and to invest in.

Our health care system: Talk to anybody in the province and they'll tell you that they're concerned about the state and the shape and the condition of the health care system.

Our education system: No matter how you paint it, people involved in the education system, whether it be teachers or parents of students or students themselves, will tell you that they're worried and concerned, that it's not the same system they were used to, that what you're doing is not what they expected you to do and that you are destroying what was a very excellent system.

The social safety net we put in place to take care of people who fall through the cracks when there are difficult times, as there always are in any jurisdiction where there's an economy working, particularly where it's a market-driven economy: You only have to look at those people who are most directly targeted and who have become victims of this government: the poor in our province.

I said the other night that we are becoming, in communities, frayed at the edges. That fray is beginning to come closer and closer to the centre. Sooner or later we will all experience it.

The Speaker: The member for Ottawa West has two minutes to respond.

Mr Cullen: I'd like to thank the members for Algoma, Northumberland, Prescott and Russell, and Sault Ste Marie for their comments.

When the member for Northumberland talks about the federal buildings in Ottawa-Carleton, one has to assume that they ought to pay their fair share of tax. How is it that when they do pay their fair share of tax for the municipal services they consume, the city of Ottawa has a \$10 million bill as a result of downloading and the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton has a \$50 million bill as the result of downloading? This is cold comfort to the taxpayers in Ottawa-Carleton, who, by the way, have been paying provincial tax all this time and also are still looking for their income tax cut.

With respect to the comment about how many economists you have and how many opinions, parenthetically, I do collect economist jokes; please send them over.

But my colleague from Kingston and the Islands talked about the economist from the Bank of Montreal and I earlier referred to an economist from the Royal Bank of Canada. I just want to quote from an economist, the director of forecasting at the Conference Board of Canada: "I find the whole argument about tax cuts specious, because we've had a tax cut, but we've laid off thousands of public servants and cut hospital jobs." He doesn't think that the income tax cut has had much of an effect on the economy here, and I have to agree with him.

I think the remarks of the member for Sault Ste Marie are most telling. What is the effect of this government's agenda? Presently in Ontario, over half a million children are living at or below the poverty line. We've had child care funding cut by \$65 million, and there are over 30,000 families on waiting lists for child care subsidies. In Toronto, 71,000 kids are looking at food banks. Ontario has the second-highest child use of food banks in the

country, after Prince Edward Island. We have homelessness. We have child abuse —

The Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Wildman: I said earlier that I had come to this debate to listen to determine how I might vote on Bill 15. I have indeed listened and I've tried to analyse the bill. I've listened to the comments of the various members and looked at what the bill says. In determining and laying out what my position will be on this legislation, I would like to refer to parts I and II of the bill and particularly to part V. Then I will have some comments to make about part VI as well.

Parts I and II make changes in the tax system. This bill facilitates the changes that are touted in the budget, and the government makes these arguments that in making these changes, there will be more money available for the private sector for spending and investment and this will produce confidence and produce jobs in Ontario.

We've heard all the arguments about this and about a number of opinions of various economists, usually banking economists, who say one thing or another. Some say these changes do indeed stimulate spending and jobs. Others say no, the changes in the economy, the improvements we've seen in southern Ontario — but not in northern Ontario, I would point out — are largely related to the export markets and the fact that the American economy is accelerating at an enormous rate. That has meant that there have been more markets for Canadian goods, particularly manufactured goods and particularly in the auto sector: auto parts and automobiles. I won't get into that argument. I just want to deal with the question of the relationship between parts I and II, and part V.

Before getting into that, though, I would make this comment: It seems to me that if a government wishes to use tax expenditures — because that's what they are, tax expenditures — to stimulate private spending in the province to produce jobs, it makes sense that those people who live from one paycheque to the next would be the ones who would get the biggest tax break. They are the ones who will spend that money locally, in the local retail sector, because they are the ones who need the extra cash. People who already have money to salt away in the bank or in RRSPs or in investments abroad don't really need the money, and if they do spend it, rather than sheltering it in RRSPs or whatever, they are not as likely to spend it locally. They may spend it elsewhere, which does not produce any jobs in Ontario. It may indeed produce jobs, but not in this jurisdiction. If someone buys a condominium in Arizona or Florida or Bermuda or the Bahamas, it doesn't produce any economic benefit in Ontario.

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That's a major problem. It seems to me we should have targeted tax cuts. If you're going to go that route, the tax cuts should be targeted to those who are most likely to spend it locally. That would then benefit the mom-and-pop corner store, the supermarket, the department store, the furniture store, the appliance store, the automobile

dealership and so on in the local community and people then would be spending to generate jobs.

The other problem is that with high levels of personal debt in our economy, those who do not need the money to spend for immediate family needs may use the money simply to pay down debt. That may be a good thing for themselves and for their families, but it does not produce jobs. So those who make these kinds of arguments really should analyse them closely.

I would like to turn to parts I and II and part V of the bill. Part V of the bill refers to a piece of legislation called the Ontario Loan Act. Part V of the bill authorizes this government to borrow up to \$4.6 billion. This is a government that likes to position itself as being opposed to debt — opposed to public debt, opposed to deficits, opposed to borrowing — because they argue that this is a drain on the economy. Well, one of the central parts of this bill is to allow the government to borrow almost \$5 billion.

Why do they have to borrow this \$5 billion? The reason they have to borrow it is because that's how much it costs to finance their tax scheme: \$5 billion a year. So this government that says it's opposed to public debt and wants to bring down the debt and bring down the deficit is in fact borrowing, over its mandate, about \$20 billion to finance a tax break for the wealthy.

I don't have anything against a party that's running for election saying: "Look, we want to give more money to the wealthy. That's what we're about, and if you vote for us, we're prepared to do it. If you're wealthy, vote for us, and if you hope to be wealthy, vote for us too because you'll get a benefit here." If they want to run for election on that basis, that's fine. But they didn't say at the same time, "Of course, we're going to have to borrow the money we're going to give to you by changes in the income tax system, and we're going to have to increase the deficit in order to do this by \$20 billion."

That's beyond all the other fees they have to increase. I'm just talking about the debt thing. This is a government that says they're opposed to debt, yet they're borrowing \$20 billion. This bill right here, Bill 15, in part V authorizes the Minister of Finance under the Ontario Loan Act to borrow \$4.6 billion, and they've had to borrow in this magnitude each year since they were elected in order to finance their changes in the tax system. This is a government that pretends to be opposed to deficits, pretends to be opposed to debt, but in fact continues to borrow like a drunken sailor.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): But student debt is okay.

Mr Wildman: That's true. When I say this government is opposed to debt, what they really say is that they're opposed to public debt. They're not opposed to private debt. If the various changes they make increase private debt, well, that's just the luck of the draw and that's too bad. If you mortgage the future of our young people by telling them that if they graduate from university they're going to have a debt of somewhere between \$20,000 and \$25,000, and over the next 20 to 30

years, if the trend continues as a result of the deregulation of tuition fees, they will have debt somewhere near \$60,000, that's okay.

It's unfortunate, though, because they told that same generation when they were running for election that they were running because they wanted to save their generation from debt and debt charges. But all they've done is move it from public debt to private debt. They've transferred it directly to them and said, "Fine, now you pay it," to all those students and their families.

Of course, not everyone is a student, not everyone attends university or college, and under this system fewer and fewer will be able to. There will be less access. I suppose that instead of having the debt owed by all of us as a community, this government says it's okay because it's just going to be a few individuals and their families who are going to have to pay this debt. Private debt is okay, public debt is not.

That's the connection between part I and part II of the bill and part V, which deals with the Ontario Loan Act.

The Income Tax Act and the Corporations Tax Act are being changed, and the way they're being changed requires a change to the Ontario Loan Act, requires the Treasurer to borrow money in the financial market and to increase the debt of the province in order to give a tax break to a few very well-to-do individuals.

The members across the way can't deny the fact that it says directly in Bill 15 that our Treasurer is authorized to borrow \$4.6 billion. It says that right there. There's going to be a change to the Ontario Loan Act, and the reason you have to do that is because of the changes in the other parts of the bill to the Income Tax Act and the Corporations Tax Act. It's right there. The government is increasing benefits for the wealthy, for those who will not have to pay as large a tax. Because of the tax expenditures they are making, they have to borrow the money to finance them, and that's what they are indeed: tax expenditures.

I don't have to say anything further than to say I'm opposed to borrowing for this purpose. I'm opposed to borrowing and increasing the debt and the deficit for this purpose, because it does not benefit the community, it benefits the few at the expense of the many. That's why I don't agree with it.

I want to talk briefly about another portion of this bill. That's part VI, the one that deals with the Ontario Lottery Corporation Act. There's one section in there that we demanded and that we agree with, that is, that this bill would repeal all provisions related to video lottery terminals. We agree with that, and I won't go into that other than to say we agree with it.

The part I disagree with and that I find particularly distasteful is that portion which amends the Ontario Lottery Corporation Act by adding health care and charities to the authorized list of purposes for the lottery corporation's net profits. Many people might wonder why I'm opposed to this change. Many would say, "If the government is going to provide money from the lottery corporation's profits for health care and for funding

charities, surely that's a good thing." I don't think it is, and I'll explain why.

One of the things that defines us as Canadians is our commitment to quality health care for everyone in Canada. One of the things we are proud of in Ontario is the fact that we are committed to a health care system which does not bankrupt the sick, which does not say to those who are ill that you cannot get service, cannot get health care unless you have the dough; that does not say you have to use your credit card when you come in the door or you don't get service, that you have to write the cheque at the emergency room or you don't get service.

All of us as a community share the bill for health care and individuals who need health care have access to it no matter what their income, no matter what their economic status. That is one of the things that defines us as Canadians. I'm proud as a New Democrat to say that, knowing the history of the health care system and how it developed in Canada, knowing the contribution that the CCF-NDP, led by people like Tommy Douglas, made to bring socialized medicine to Canada.

Mr Gerretsen: How about Pearson?

Mr Wildman: Pearson followed suit after Saskatchewan had established it. So should Paul Martin Sr take credit for that, and so should the justice who recently died, the one who carried out the study for the federal government at the time.

Mr Gerretsen: Emmett Hall.

Mr Wildman: Emmett Hall. All of them deserve credit. That's one of the things that all of us as Canadians have come to value and is one of the things that make us quite different from our neighbour to the south, where close to 40 million people have no health insurance at all, where many others have to finance their health insurance privately at great cost and where if you face the situation of a major illness like cancer or a serious heart condition, it could mean serious financial loss, as well as all of the heartache and difficulty that illness brings to a family.

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So we value this. I believe that as Canadians and Ontarians, when we value such a health care system, as a community we must be committed to raising the tax revenue required to finance that system. We should not say that the quality of our health care will be dependent upon gaming, that the quality of health care that is deliverable to Ontarians will be dependent on revenue from gambling.

I'm not being critical of our neighbours in Ireland, but I would point out that the Irish Sweepstakes has been one of the ways the Republic of Ireland has financed its health care system for many years. I don't agree with that approach. I don't believe that gambling should be one of the main sources of revenue for financing quality health care for people in need, for the sick. I believe that all of us in our community who can afford it and have incomes that require us to pay taxes should be prepared as a community to contribute to the quality health care system that benefits everyone in our community. I don't believe it should be a question of chance. That is not a way to finance a health

care system, so I oppose those changes in part VI of this bill to the Ontario Lottery Corporation Act.

This is a government that, when it was a party in opposition, campaigned against expansion of gambling in the province. I remember that the Treasurer, when he sat on this side of this House, was vehemently opposed to expansion of gambling. I remember that the current Premier, when he was leader of the third party in the province, said, "We in Ontario" — I remember almost word for word what he said — "do not have a revenue problem, we have an expenditure problem. We don't need any revenues, I don't want any revenues from gambling. I'm not interested in it." He said that. He made it clear on many occasions. Yet now we have not only this change before us in this bill, but we have a government before us that wants to have 44 casinos established in this province, purportedly to provide revenue for charities, but in fact 44 casinos that will provide an enormous take for the Treasurer of Ontario.

The government in this assembly, the Conservative Party in this assembly, has yet to explain that. They talk about promises made, promises kept, and yet they don't deal with the fact that the Treasurer, when he was on this side of the House, was vehemently opposed to any expansion of gambling in Ontario. He was one of the most rabid in making that point in the House. The Premier, when he was the leader of the third party, said he didn't want the revenue, that he didn't need it, that Ontario didn't need it and that he didn't want it. He wanted to have nothing to do with gambling revenues.

Why? Why the change? Why do we have this amendment before us to finance our health care from gambling revenues?

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): Just talk.

Mr Wildman: The member across the way says the Premier was just talk at that time. Maybe that's true. I don't know. Maybe that's the case: It was just talk; it didn't mean anything. I suppose that may be the case. I had greater respect for him than that. I thought when he said something, he meant it, but I guess as the member for Etobicoke said, it was just talk. So okay, it's just talk. That's an explanation. It's one I wouldn't have expected from a member of the Conservative Party in this House, but I guess it's as good an explanation as any: It's just talk.

I'm clear on the record that I have listened to the debate in this House, I've analysed the bill and I've looked at the relationship between parts I and II and part V. I don't accept the view that we should borrow money and increase the deficit and the debt to finance tax changes that will benefit the wealthy, and I'm completely opposed to financing our health care system out of games of chance. That is not acceptable and I view that in the same way the Premier did when he was on this side of the House and said he did not want revenues from gambling to finance things like health care.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I want to comment briefly on some of the remarks made by my friend from

Algoma, specifically his comments with respect to the Ontario Loan Act, which is part V of the bill. He spent some time on that. I think you know exactly what this is for. This is to finance the deficit that has been going on in this province. You're talking as if this is something brand-new. You used to do this when it was \$11.6 billion, so I don't know what you're talking about. You're the people who created this mess in the first place. That's why we're going through this whole circle, to try and remove that deficit. We have promised to do that and we're going to do that. You've got a lot of nerve to stand up in this House and talk as if this is something new. This is not something new; this is something that you've been doing, and that before that the Liberals used to do. The whole purpose of this is to obtain money to pay for the deficit you started to create.

Laughter.

Mr Tilson: You laugh, but that's exactly what it does. That's why this province is in the mess it is, because of the spending. You were spending more than was coming in. That's what this is all about. We can't keep spending more than is coming in. Somehow you got it in your bright head to have all these wonderful policies you couldn't afford. You start to stand up in the House and say, "You're putting this province into debt." Baloney. You're the people who created this mess. What do you think this is all about? We're trying to end the mess you created with your red tape and your debt and your overspending. It's outrageous.

Mr Gerretsen: I would just say to the member for Dufferin-Peel that I find it very ironic that the amount you're borrowing under this act, \$4.6 billion, just happens to be the amount of the total tax cut to date as well. As far as I'm concerned, if you didn't have the tax cut you wouldn't have had to borrow and we would probably have a balanced budget by now. That's number one.

Number two: You should speak to your friend over there from Northumberland. He talked for about 20 minutes or so about how the tax cut was really helping the Ontario economy. Then, after the 20 minutes, he all of a sudden says, "Of course the federal government is taxing it back." If that's the case and the tax cut is not having any effect at all, how can you take credit for the fact that the tax cut apparently, according to him, is benefiting the Ontario economy? You can't have it both ways.

Let's very quickly look at your own budget document, and let's see how much people actually get back.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: I'm speaking to the Speaker.

Earlier tonight I was told —

The Speaker: You're speaking about the member for Algoma's comments.

Mr Gerretsen: The member for Algoma always makes an awful lot of sense in this House. Let me just tell you quickly: A single senior with a net income of \$14,940 gets \$60 per year in your tax cut. A one-earner couple making \$29,000 gets \$400 per year as a result of your tax cut. You ask those people whether they aren't spending this money, and much more than that, on the various user

fees your government has initiated, whether we're talking about user fees with respect to the health care system if they're seniors, or many of the user fees that municipalities have had to initiate. The tax cut, sir, simply isn't working.

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Mr Lessard: I want to express my appreciation for the comments by the member for Algoma, for whom I have a deep respect and high regard.

I was especially impressed by his remarks fact that we shouldn't have a health care system that is based on an ability to pay and that we shouldn't have a health care system that is funded by the proceeds of the lottery corporation. That's not the way we should be funding our health care system. It's a system we should ensure continues to be publicly funded. We all share in the interest of having that system publicly funded.

I was interested in his remarks that all those charity casinos were going to provide revenues for the provincial government. I kind of wonder whatever happened to those charity casinos. It's just another example of this government's mismanagement. They said they were going to do this — I don't think that should be a means to finance our health care system — but they still haven't come around to do it.

Anyway, this is an example of what things are like in the Mike Harris Ontario government and the Ontario Lottery Corp. In Windsor we have a Freedom Festival and each year they always have a community partner mobile stage program from the lottery corporation. This year they were advised that program has been cut out. The stage they have always been provided with by the lottery corporation, for years and years, it is not going to be able to provide any more, and it's unfair.

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): I welcome the opportunity to comment on a couple of the ideas that were suggested by the member for Algoma. One of the things he spent a great deal of time talking about was the question of the tax cut. I think it's rather interesting because very clearly, in the previous government, it was viewed as necessary to increase taxes in order to raise revenues. Very clearly, when you look at the numbers, that didn't work. It demonstrates beyond any shadow of doubt that it is the cutting of a tax rate that sends out a very clear message.

One part of that message is that people can spend their money better themselves, and the second thing is that it sends out a message of creating the climate for jobs. When you look at the fact that in this province 345,000 new private sector jobs have been created, very clearly the tax cuts are having a beneficial impact.

The member for Algoma also referred to the fact that this is for the rich. I'd like to draw attention to the fact that it is those people who earn less who benefit more. He referred to the people who are the wealthiest in this province. It's very clear when you look at those people who accept the responsibility for the Fair Share health levy, who earn over \$75,000, those people are not getting the

kind of break that the people between \$25,000 and \$65,000 are.

The Speaker: Member for Algoma, response.

Mr Wildman: I'd like to thank my friends from Durham-York, Windsor-Riverside, Kingston and The Islands and Dufferin-Peel for their comments. I am surprised that such a dry subject would produce such controversy and intense feeling, but I do appreciate their views. I started out by saying that economics is a dismal science; perhaps it's not as dismal as I thought.

I would comment to the member for Durham-York that 6% of the income earners in Ontario earn individually more than \$80,000 a year. That's 6%. They get 25% of the dollars from the tax break, so you can't argue that the people at the top end aren't getting most of it. They get 25% and yet they are only 6% of the people.

I want to comment on my friend from Kingston and The Islands. He's quite right. The \$4.6 billion that part V of the bill authorizes the Treasurer to borrow is almost exactly the amount that it costs in tax expenditures for the tax break. It's very simple math. The government is borrowing the money to give the money to the people who benefit from the tax break. They don't have it, they're borrowing it. They're increasing the debt in order to do it.

As the member for Windsor-Riverside said, this government believes in private debt, and private debt is okay as long as it's not public. Again, I appreciate his remarks with regard to the fact that it's very unwise to be financing our health care system that we all value from games of chance. That's just not appropriate in our society.

The Speaker: Further debate? The member for Niagara South.

Applause.

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): That's very kind of my colleagues in the assembly.

Mr Speaker, I intend to share my time with the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

The Speaker: You need consent for that.

Mr Hudak: I do?

The Speaker: Yes, you do.

Mr Hudak: Mr Speaker, if I could can kindly ask consent of the members to split my time with the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

The Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Hudak: I thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank my colleagues this evening. I sit beside the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale every day we're here and benefit from his wit and wisdom in all these debates and I know the other members of the assembly are anxious to hear from the member on his perception of Bill 15 and the good things that it means to the province of Ontario and the good folks of Etobicoke.

I would like to add a few things. I've already heard this evening from the members for Nepean and Northumberland and from Halton. What I would like to add to the debate is a bit about how Bill 15 and its budget initiatives are being received in the Niagara Peninsula. I think you're seeing a remarkable turnaround in Niagara due to the activities of this government and bills like Bill 15.

Many members here as well as the folks watching at home will probably remember just four years ago, about the mid-1990s, the unemployment rate in Niagara was over 14%.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): Who was the government then?

Mr Hudak: I believe the government then was the Bob Rae NDP government.

Mr Wildman: No, it was the Mulroney government.

Mr Hudak: In Ontario. We saw this huge change. We'll put the matter to the cause of those problems. A 14.2% unemployment rate at that time, which was among the highest rates of unemployment across Canada. The Niagara Peninsula had one of the highest rates of unemployment across Canada. I'm glad to say that under this government and under bills like the bill before us today, Bill 15, we have seen a remarkable, an astonishing, an outstanding reduction in the rate of unemployment in the Niagara Peninsula.

Mr Klees: And who is the government today?

Mr Hudak: To answer my friend the member for York-Mackenzie who asks who the government today is, of course it's Mike Harris and the Conservative government.

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You've seen, Mr Speaker, the unemployment rate in Niagara cut in half, from 14.2% down to the low sevens. I'm going to make a bold prediction that if we pass bills like Bill 15 and those that follow, the unemployment rate in Niagara will continue to fall. I'm very confident of that.

One of the main reasons that this is going on is the very simple premise that only Mike Harris and his team had the courage to say during the election campaign in 1995, that tax cuts create jobs. We're seeing that working out. We are cutting taxes. We're cutting taxes on income. We're cutting taxes on small business. We're cutting taxes on young couples or young individuals who are buying for the first time a home to help spur the construction industry. For Fort Erie we've decreased the tax on the racetracks to allow for more money coming into the racing industry, which means good things in the long run for racetracks like the beautiful track we have in Fort Erie.

A total of 66 tax cuts to date: The number 66 is significant at this point because if you combine the tax hikes, the increase in taxes that we saw under the Peterson-McGuinly Liberals and the Rae-Wildman NDP, they come to a total of 65 tax hikes, but 66 cuts under the Conservative government.

I heard earlier some members opposite saying that the tax cut is strictly for the benefit of the rich in society. Then we heard the counterargument from the member for Durham-York, who said it's quite the opposite: Income tax has become even more progressive under this government. There are thousands of individuals and families in Ontario now who used to pay taxes, low-income families, modest-income families, who now will not pay any Ontario income tax. That's certainly a shot in the arm for those families who are trying to climb up the economic

ladder and put some money aside in the bank to save for their futures — more money coming back to them.

If you look at the entire package of tax changes under this government, the tax cuts and the Fair Share health levy, the tax system has become more progressive. Certainly you would expect that the members opposite in the Liberals and the NDP would support a progressive tax rate in the province. They believe fundamentally that the rich should pay a higher proportion of their income in taxes and that low-income individuals should pay a much lesser proportion of their income in taxes or not pay any taxes at all.

The member for Kingston and The Islands asked what I believe. I believe, as I said earlier, that tax cuts create jobs, so we disagree on that one. But ironically, the point I am trying to make is that under our changes to taxes, low-income individuals — thousands of them across the province — are no longer paying provincial income tax. The federal Liberal government still makes them pay the federal tax, and I understand they don't want to change that. Hopefully, some day they will. The Ontario government has eliminated that tax for low incomes. As well, the percentage reduction for modest-income families is greater than it is for high-income families. So the tax cut has indeed been progressive, and I'd ask for support.

I think the confusion comes from the confusion of tax rates and taxes. Yes, we have reduced the tax rates. People in the province of Ontario at the end of the day will be on average paying 30% less in their Ontario income taxes plus the other 60 or so tax cuts, depending on how they spend their money. So the tax rates have been reduced. However, because this has stirred the economy because there is more investment, more jobs being created, more consumer confidence and more business confidence, you have seen an increase in the tax revenue. Not only is the plan working because tax cuts are creating jobs, the plan is also working because tax cuts have brought in more revenue.

What is the government doing with this revenue?

First of all, one of our major commitments was to eliminate the deficit by the year 2000-2001. It's important to put this into perspective. The deficit, when we came into office, was over \$11 billion, and certainly we had to make some very difficult decisions to get that under control, to reduce that. I'm pleased to say tonight that we are ahead of schedule in lowering the deficit towards balancing it in 2000-2001. By cutting taxes we have created jobs, which has meant more revenue to government coffers, which in turn has led to a quicker reduction in the deficit, towards balancing it as we promised. I'm confident another promise made will result in another promise kept.

Second, the tax cuts, which have brought in more jobs and more revenue, like they do in Bill 15, have allowed us to invest in priority areas for Ontario residents. I'll give you some examples. We have announced most recently, because of initiatives like we have in Bill 15, 20,000 — 20,000, member for Nepean —

Mr Baird: Wow.

Mr Hudak: — new long-term-care beds in the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: To make it clear to those enraptured by my statement, that is the first investment, not even of that nature or that scope, but the first investment in long-term-care beds in over 10 years.

Mr Baird: They must have done one.

Mr Hudak: There was not one single bed.

Mr Baird: Not one?

Mr Hudak: Not one single bed in 10 years; now 20,000. Do you know what that means for Niagara? You may have seen the announcements, the request for proposal in the paper, 100 beds for Niagara, to begin.

Applause.

Mr Hudak: I know the members of the assembly are excited about that for Niagara residents as I am. But that's only the beginning: 100 beds followed by another 546 new long-term-care beds for a total of 646 new long-term-care beds for the Niagara Peninsula alone to plan for a growing and aging senior population.

Let me tell you another thing that we're using the money for. We have put on the table the additional money that we received through tax cuts to help out those victims of tainted blood, for hepatitis C. The current deal offered by the federal government would compensate only those between 1986 and 1990. But Ontario, proud again, taking a leadership role again, the strong province again, driving the rest of Canada once more because of tax cuts to create jobs, to bring in more revenue, has put on the table to say that Ontario views the issue as the same, whether you were infected on December 31, 1985 or January 1, 1986. We're not going to split hairs.

Maybe there are legal arguments, I'm not sure. But to put that into the balance with compassion and issues of fundamental justice, it makes sense for Ontario to extend that package to all hepatitis C victims. I know that the members opposite have supported that and I congratulate them for that. —

Mr Gerretsen: Give some time for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Mr Hudak: It's a very good point. The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale has great points to bring up, and I'll get to him shortly.

To finish off, because I have some of my clippings here this evening, I did say I'd talk about the Niagara Peninsula. I know members are anxious to hear about what people are saying in Niagara.

One of the clippings from the Welland Tribune is "Small Businesses Cheering Tax Cuts," the big title there, which is certainly true. We are cutting the corporate tax for small businesses in half. We're eliminating the employer health tax for small businesses to help them create jobs.

I'll give you an example, Mr Speaker. Ironically in the riding of the member for Welland-Thorold, somebody who disagrees: "The executive director of the Welland-Pelham Chamber of Commerce believes Tuesday's provincial budget will help small and large Ontario businesses alike

to become more competitive in the global economy." She said the news of the final phase of the employer health tax cut, the tax on jobs being cut, is great news. Another positive step for small business is a 50% cut to the small business corporations tax rate. The director says, "Anything that will enable Ontario businesses to become more competitive is good news." She anticipates that even more people will be hired because of these initiatives.

One person quoted in this article said that 36 new cuts introduced Tuesday will assist in the remarkable turnaround in the Ontario economy by creating more jobs. He noted that last year's total of 240,000 new jobs in the province set a record. I think we'll break that record again. That individual was Tory backbencher Tim Hudak, the member for Niagara South.

Mr Wildman: You're quoting yourself. That's against the rules.

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Mr Hudak: I just thought it was a great point. I just want to point out that the member for Niagara South has been described as "rookie backbencher Tim Hudak," so "Conservative backbencher Tim Hudak" is one step up.

I have a couple of things to pass on about Niagara, the good news for jobs. Recently three employers in my riding announced major projects and are now manufacturing in Stevensville. Stevensville, of course, is home to the —

Mr Baird: Tim Hudak Action Centre.

Mr Hudak: Tim Hudak Action Centre, the member for Nepean says.

Mr Palladini, the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, was in Niagara South last week.

You know what? To give credit to the great team they have down at Ronal, the hardworking people at Ronal have the exclusive contract for the aluminium wheel rim for the new Volkswagen Beetle, one of the hottest cars around. So if you buy a Beetle in Canada, the States, Mexico, Japan, wherever you buy it, odds are that wheel rim was made in Stevensville, Ontario, which means more jobs at Ronal.

Fraser Ship Repairs in Port Colborne has doubled its employment since this government came into office, up to 500 or so employees from 200-and-some in 1994-95. Things are looking good for them.

Sumi Durez as well, in Fort Erie, the biggest city in my riding, has been expanding rapidly with, I might add, increased investment from the Japanese, who could have invested anywhere in the world, and they could have done it years ago, but chose most recently this past year to invest in Fort Erie, Ontario, because they see the rebounded economy, they see productive workers and they believe in what Mike Harris and the Common Sense Revolution have achieved for the province of Ontario, which means tax cuts are creating more jobs. More jobs have meant more revenue to put into programs like the biggest increase in long-term-care beds we've seen, 20,000 new beds. It can help us find justice and compassion for the hepatitis C victims. It has meant more money into community care. Cardiac surgeries are down 20% on the

waiting lists. Those are just some of the many accomplishments this government has achieved in three years.

Mr Wildman: If you don't hurry up, your seatmate is going to have a heart attack.

Mr Hudak: At this point I will, at the request of the member for Algoma, turn the floor over to the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): It's really fascinating to listen to the member for Niagara South, because he does tell it as it is and what is occurring locally, provincially and globally.

We've listened to the so-called discussion across the way on this bill, that the whole concept of tax rate reductions is somehow inherently the wrong way to go. One thing we haven't heard, however, is any mention in Bill 15 as to what their position is or their alternative position is regarding the land transfer tax and the exemption under that particular bill that has been put forward by the Minister of Finance in two budgets. Do we hear them attacking that particular proposition in Bill 15?

It means that for every new home buyer in the province there is at least an average of \$2,000 per new home buyer if they get the exemption. When they get that exemption, they probably utilize it to pay down their mortgage or perhaps to purchase some new furniture. Across the way, of course, they would be opposed to that because a tax exemption is a tax rate reduction. Those folks across the way don't believe in any virtue of a tax rate reduction vis-à-vis its strategic linkage to jobs.

Often we hear across the way our colleagues opposite simply argue for the existing status quo or defending probably what they did in the past regarding tax hikes. If you had tax hikes, why was it that we had such a severe decline in the economy when the NDP assumed power in the first budget of 1991? We had the old Keynesian nostrum put out that we'll pump prime the economy. That incidentally increased, widgeted up significantly, the \$11.4-billion deficit we inherited.

Did we hear anything about an increase in jobs as a result of increasing the deficit back in 1990-91, when the former member for Nickel Belt advocated that position in his budget? If you go back and look at job creation, as they ramped up tax expenditures, your jobs declined. So in that type of economic environment, we should have had just the opposite.

They have been defending for the last three, three and a half years that somehow or other there's a great virtue in tax hikes. We had from the Glibs, from 1985 to 1990, 35 tax increases, yet the job increase was not that significant during the mid-1980s. We had a growth rate of 4% generally in the economy from 1985 to 1990, yet the number of jobs did not increase with the increase in expenditures on the tax side. How come that is, if that is the great defence they have over there? They call tax reduction stupid, bizarre, crazy etc. Well, we can apply the same methodology and description for tax hikes. There's absolutely no defence for increasing your taxes when you already have a \$100-billion deficit.

The other thing I wanted to add is that we don't hear anything from the folks across the way regarding the decline over eight years in the small business tax. You don't hear them saying, "Well, let's ramp that up from 9.5% to 12% because it's going to increase the number of jobs." I'd like to hear from members opposite whether they could advocate such a position. It's probably quite untenable. They've heard from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, they've heard from their retailers that when you do that you have fewer people buying consumer goods in the stores or any other type of consumer durable.

In absolute fact, this particular piece of legislation, whether it's locally, provincially or globally applied, has got this province moving way into the future.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Gerretsen: I think the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale should clearly understand that we have nothing against tax cuts. The problem is that you cannot have a tax cut when you still have an annual deficit, because it means you're still adding to the public debt of this province. As has been indicated on many occasions in the past, the public debt in this province has during your mandate increased from \$89 billion in total to \$105 billion — by \$16 billion. The interest cost of the public debt — your own budget document indicates this — has gone up from \$7.8 billion per year to a projected \$9.4 billion a year. We're spending more on servicing the public debt of this province now than we are on social services. You just don't get it, do you?

The other thing I found absolutely astonishing is that for the first time in my limited experience in this House, the three years that I've been here, we actually had a member quoting himself. It is my understanding, from talking to some more senior members in this House, who have been around for 20 or 30 years that they have never, ever heard this. I've never heard it in any forum that I've been at. It is ludicrous. Are you that hard up for quotes that you've got to start quoting yourself?

Just for the record, let me say this to you: Yes, I think we should help first-time home buyers. I think it is a good idea to have the land transfer tax exemption go on for another year. I think it is a good idea because the construction industry has to be stimulated. But let me just tell you that the economy in Ontario may be rosy as far as you're concerned, but you go anywhere in eastern Ontario, east of Cobourg, and talk to the small business owners there and they certainly haven't seen any economic recovery.

Mr Wildman: It's with some trepidation that I stand to comment on the remarks of my friends from Etobicoke-Rexdale and Niagara South. I think the comments they made, then commented upon by my friend from Kingston and The Islands, just prove the point I was making earlier, that if you get a bunch of economic arguments put together, if you have two or three economic arguments, you have about 10 different opinions.

The fact is that no matter how the members try to paint it, part V of this bill allows the government to borrow \$4.6

billion each year, and that amount is almost exactly the amount of the tax changes. The government is borrowing the money to finance the tax changes. The government does not have the money and they are borrowing. This is a government that claims to be against deficit financing, that claims to want to lower the debt, yet they don't have the money to give out the tax break but they're going to borrow it in order to do it.

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This is a government that tries to play both ends against the middle — the suggestion that the serious recession we experienced in the 1990s that was not just a problem in Ontario but was in fact global is somehow the fault of one particular government. I guess I could blame it on the Mulroney government, but I wouldn't be one to do that.

Mr Parker: I listened with interest to the comments from the member for Niagara South and the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. I've also listened with interest to the remarks in the questions and comments following. In those remarks, this government and the two speakers on the bill have been criticized on the subject of the tax cut, because all of a sudden on the opposition benches they seem to have caught religion and they are committed to balancing the budget.

This is a new item to the people of Ontario. I hope they're listening, I hope they're paying close attention that now the members of the Liberal Party and the members of the NDP here in Ontario are fiscal conservatives; they are focused entirely on balanced budgets. They've forgotten, of course, that they're the ones who put the budget out of whack in the first place, and this government has worked over the past few years to bring the deficit down from \$11 billion to less than \$5 billion and we're on track to achieving our pledge of a balanced budget over the course of this government's term.

Of course, if all we had to do during our term was to balance the budget, we could have done that already. If that's all that had to be done by this government to correct the mess this province was left in, then we could have balanced the budget by now. But we had other problems besides an \$11-billion deficit. We also had massive unemployment — over one million people unemployed in this province.

We have two areas where we've had to advance. One is in the area of the budget, where we've had to reduce spending to bring the budget into balance, and we're on track in doing that in the time frame that we committed to. We've also had to reduce taxes to increase employment. We have increased employment just over the last year. We've seen over 265,000 new jobs —

The Speaker: Questions and comments? Responses.

Mr Hudak: I thank my colleagues for the comments. I apologize for making a bit of a joke and using my own quote. I thought it was kind of funny. I think it's because there have been a lot of long faces on the Liberal benches these days, because they know the plan is working. They know we're cutting taxes to create jobs. They know the jobs are going through the roof. They know more revenue

is coming into the province for key areas like classroom education and health care.

Because the member for Kingston and The Islands didn't like my quote, I have a couple more for him about the Niagara Peninsula, for example. Human Resources Development Canada just put out a survey that said that in the next few years there will be 50,000 new jobs in the Niagara Peninsula alone because of the boom from the Mike Harris government — 50,000 new jobs, which is unprecedented economic growth in development in the region. The basis for prediction: Carol Dupuis, the HRDC labour market analyst.

Funding for new textbooks: The budget contained \$100 million for new textbooks. Said Bill Miller, associate director of the new Niagara district school board, "That's marvellous news." It's a quote in the Welland Tribune.

I have a couple of more quotes that the member from Kingston surely would be aware of and be supportive of. You would think you would follow through and be aware of these. I have some more quotes.

"It's good to see money go back into tourism, particularly if we can access some of it for the Kingston area. Over the past 10 years the tourism marketing budget has gone down drastically, but now we're seeing it go up." That's David Phillips, the Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce.

Another one: "Small business tax cuts are really being felt in the community. They help increase the cash flow and they help stimulate the economy. A company will now be able to go out and buy that photocopier it needs" — John Battams, quoted in the Kingston Whig-Standard.

"We're looking at reinvesting in this province, so this is going to help us along the road" — Chuck McDonald also.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I'm pleased to join the debate tonight on the second reading of Bill 15, the budget bill. Obviously, it gives me an opportunity to say some things about the budget read by the Treasurer here a few days ago.

I've enjoyed the debate tonight. It's been quite lively and quite interesting, often more about religion than about fiscal policy, but I suppose that's not a great surprise in the business of politics.

I want to take the opportunity tonight to pay tribute to the Deputy Minister of Finance, Michael Gourley, who, regrettably, is leaving the public service. Michael, as the Treasurer observed when he read the budget speech here a couple of days ago, has been an enormous part of the senior public service in the government of Ontario for the past many years. I had the privilege in the mid-to-late 1980s to work with Michael when he was the head of the budget office in our time in government, and I know the current Treasurer speaks for all of us when he says it's hard to find a more diligent and more exemplary public servant. Michael, wherever you are, I want to wish you all the best in your new endeavours and say that I and all of us in this Legislature and many previous Legislatures have greatly appreciated the hard work and the good example

you have set. Certainly there's a lot of Michael Gourley, as Mr Eves said, in the budget we're debating tonight.

It is a good-news budget. You'd have to be a Cassandra of some special kind not to see the good news in this budget. However I want tonight, in the time remaining to me, to look at some of the specifics in the budget. If anyone has the budget papers, I might ask you to turn to page 54. I find that when you look at the numbers, you find some very interesting, perhaps even some counter-intuitive, data; page 54, Ontario budget table B-4, "Operating Expenses." I'm interested when I look at the five-year spending plan, 1994-99. I find it interesting, understandable in some respects, but interesting and surprising. I think the people of Ontario would be surprised to find that according to this budget, in fiscal 1998-99 it is the plan of this government to spend \$54.627 billion, fully \$2.3 billion more than was actually spent in the fiscal year 1994-95.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): Health care spending is up.

Mr Conway: You're right. Health care is up; if I look at the line items, health care is up, but it's up marginally, according to the numbers. If I look at the numbers — I'm sorry. It is up from \$17.6 billion to \$18.6 billion, but social service spending is down by nearly the same amount. Education is up by as much as health. There are reasons, and I can take you through the reasons, but it is interesting none the less that the government of Ontario in fiscal 1998-99 will spend \$2.3 billion more than was actually spent in the last year of the Rae government.

Mr Ford: That is exactly the cut the feds took.

Mr Conway: That's not exactly right. I ask the member from Etobicoke to look at the numbers; that's what I have in front of me, the numbers. In terms of percentage, the executive office account is up by nearly 100% over that five-year period. I'm sure there's an answer. Mr Speaker Stockwell gets some credit, because on the other side the Board of Internal Economy is down in real terms by about 15% or 20%. But I repeat, the executive office account over that five-year period is up from \$10 to \$19 million. I'm simply reading from the budget document.

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I find it interesting, if I look at the actual spending pattern. What do I see? I see, yes, big cuts in social services over the five-year period, down from \$9.3 billion to \$7.8 billion; education up from \$8.3 billion to \$10.2 billion; health up from \$17.6 billion to \$18.6 billion; but, as my friends have observed, public debt interest up from \$7.8 billion to \$9.2 billion. The reality is that on the spending side, this document tells me that over the five-year period from 1994-99 we will be spending \$2.3 billion more at the end of the cycle.

Let me quickly, because I don't have a great deal of time, take a look at pages 32 and 34, the in-year changes. It's very interesting. If I look at the budget document and at the in-year changes in fiscal 1997-98, it's even more interesting. What do I see? According to the budget paper, I see that in-year revenue is up \$3.7 billion, and that's a good thing. I am not going to quarrel with that. A billion

of that is a carry-over of personal income tax from the year before, so we should be careful about the level. None the less, it's \$3.7 billion more in the fiscal year than was projected. That's page 32.

Turn to page 34, in-year spending changes: Spending is up by \$3,322 billion. That's a lot of money, folks.

Mr Ford: Of course it's a lot of money.

Mr Conway: I simply say it because the mantra is being cast about, from the action centre in Stevensville and wherever else, that we are cutting taxes and cutting spending. Well, the document does not show that.

When I look at the spending, when I look at the budget paper, page 35, and I look at the spending area, what do I find? I find \$3.3 billion of increased in-year spending, and where is it? The bulk of it is in higher-than-expected municipal and health care restructuring. Let me tell you, those costs are not going to go away.

Mr Klees: That's one-time spending.

Mr Conway: The member for York-Mackenzie says one-time. We will see.

I heard the Minister of Finance on the radio the other day. I darned near drove off the road because he was asked on the CBC Radio Noon program by a caller from Wolfe Island, "What about the future of these ferries on our part of eastern Lake Ontario?" I heard the Minister of Finance with my own ears. He gave a perfectly good response, which was to say that it is absolutely impossible to imagine that those municipalities could shoulder the cost. He's right, and they will not be shouldering it, mark my words.

But that's just one small example. There will be many more. I simply look at this: In year one, we've got spending of \$2.601 billion above the budget plan to deal with higher-than-expected health care and municipal expenses. My friend from Rodden township knows that as we head into the next year and the year after, there will be many claims made by municipalities which will have to attract the positive attention and response from the Minister of Finance, whoever he or she is.

I just ask honourable members to look at the documents. In this past year, where growth was wonderful — we had real GDP of 4.8%. Listen, that's much better than it was the year before, when it was down around 1.5%.

Somebody said a few moments ago about the mess they're in in British Columbia. I'm not an expert on the British Columbia economy, but I can tell you this: The British Columbia economy is very dependent on southeast

Asia, Japan particularly. The Japanese miracle has come apart. It is a mess. If you look at where we all were five years ago about the Japan miracle, if you look at the academic and economic literature of the late 1980s and the early 1990s — CBC Radio the other night ran a repeat broadcast of the Davos conference of 1992, and the collective universal wisdom about the Japan miracle was something to behold. Well, it's a mess. To date, it hasn't affected central North America, and hopefully it won't.

Yes, we've had a good year. Let there be no confusion. When growth rates roar near 5%, it's not a bad time to be chancellor of the exchequer. It looks, for the next couple of years, as if it will continue, and hopefully it will. But if I look at the actual experience of this document — we've been through a lot, absolutely, and some of it had to be done. Any government elected in 1995 was, whether it wanted to admit it or not, going to have to administer some very painful medicine.

I just ask the House to look at the numbers. What are the numbers? I wish I had with me — and I don't. I'd like to see the spending back to 1992, because I'm not so sure that in constant dollars the Rae government didn't cut as much between 1993 and 1995 as you will have cut between 1995 and 1998. I'm not sure, but I bet it might be close.

The other great benefit we've got, of course, is that inflation is low. I just want to make the observation that times are good. There's no question that there's more confidence out there; there's better consumer confidence, there's better business confidence.

Let me just leave with this: On page 10 of the budget — this is an incredible statistic. I say this as a Liberal, who was on the other side of the free trade debate 10 years ago. If you've got the budget paper, it's page 10. In 1989, exports, as a share of Ontario's GDP, were at 28.5%. We're talking, basically, about the United States economy; 90% of our exports are America-bound. So 28.5% of Ontario's GDP in 1989 derived from exports. But eight years later, that share of GDP has gone from 28.5% to 45.6%. That is a very powerful engine, but let us hope and let us pray, loyalists all, that Uncle Sam stays healthy and well, because if he catches a cold we are going to get the flu.

The Speaker: It is now 9:30 of the clock. This House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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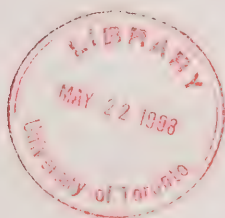
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Thursday 14 May 1998

Jeudi 14 mai 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 14 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 14 mai 1998

*The House met at 1003.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

IRISH HERITAGE DAY ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LE JOUR DU PATRIMOINE IRLANDAIS

Mr O'Toole moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act proclaiming Irish Heritage Day / Projet de loi 8, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine irlandais.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 95(c)(i), the honourable member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It is my privilege to stand in the House today —

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Because this is such a significant bill that is being presented, the House has a special presentation to make to Mr O'Toole. We are looking for unanimous consent to have him wear this pin that says, "Very Irish but hardly green." This comes with the compliments of Patrick Gillen of Irish Traditions Ltd at 444 Yonge Street. In fact, after I told him about this bill, he decided that he would supply pins for the House. Do we have unanimous consent?

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr O'Toole: I would like to thank the member for Sudbury. It's very Irish and very blue.

It is a privilege to stand in the House today to discuss my private member's Bill, Bill 8, An Act proclaiming Irish Heritage Day, March 17, in Ontario.

The act, if passed, will establish St Patrick's Day as a day of provincial recognition on which to commemorate and celebrate the historic legacy of Ontario's Irish community and its outstanding contributions to Ontario society.

At the outset I would like to say that our cultural heritage is one of the most important aspects of our identity and self-understanding. It was Patrick Moynihan in the US who wrote about the importance of cultural continuity and personal links to a wider extended family as a source of values for one's own life amidst the impersonal consumerism of North America.

Canada's multicultural self-identity is one in which Canadians uniquely blend our Canadian citizenship with the traditions of the countries left behind, which either we or our ancestors migrated from in search of a better life.

All Canadian cherish heritage. Respectfully, we live in Canada in a province like Ontario that celebrates a cultural mosaic. We have many cultural celebrations, like Caribana in Toronto, Oktoberfest in Kitchener, and in my riding of Durham East, the city of Oshawa has a wonderful Fiesta Week where most cultural groups celebrate their heritage. The Dutch, a very important group in my riding, Ukrainian, Greek, Italian, German, Caribbean, French, Portuguese, Japanese, Chinese, African and every cultural group celebrate during some time of the year.

We all at some point, and some with more intensity than others, search for our roots, a search for meaning, and this is good.

I looked in the dictionary to define the term "Irish." "Irish" is from the term "Iras," meaning of Celtic origin. The word "heritage" is described as "the sum of the qualities and potentialities genetically derived from one's ancestors."

My immediate family began its history with my father, Claire Michael O'Toole, and my mother, Ruth Annabel Driscoll. All their parents were born in Canada. Their parents had settled outside Peterborough. I am fourth-generation Irish. County Wicklow and county Cork are the places of the family roots. Sadly, I have not yet visited Ireland, but my oldest son Erin has on a couple of occasions and my sister Jane O'Toole-Goodman is planning a trip this summer. Many Irish are given to making this lifetime pilgrimage. I hope to make the voyage after my life in politics, some time in the distant future.

My cousin Lawrence O'Toole suggests that he is a distant relative of St Lawrence O'Toole, who it is said, was related to St Patrick himself. There's a tradition. It is also strongly believed that what is Power Court Park today was once the O'Toole family lands.

There are many stories like this in the Emerald Isle.

My wife's name is Peggy. Imagine that, Peggy O'Toole. It is almost like the lyrics of an Irish melody. Part of Peggy's family also comes from Ireland. Her grandfather, Herbert Brown, was a loyal Orangeman right to the end of his life. It is rumoured that there were Catholics on that side of the family, but then there are things we don't talk about. I do know, however, that they did have a beautiful daughter, my wife.

1010

The Irish have been in Canada for over 300 years and are officially recognized as one of the founding peoples. As a people, we are an integral part of Canada's national culture and identity, as is a right of all Canadians of all backgrounds. The Irish influence is evidenced in the coat of arms of Canada with the royal harp of Tara, the shamrock and the cross of St Patrick. These symbols and traditions are important and they are important to all countries.

In the early 1800s approximately 3,000 Irish settled in the Peterborough area. Peter Robinson and other famous settlers of the area are now all an important part of that area's history. Many small villages and towns in Ontario were inhabited and developed by the Irish, and these people became the community leaders. They worked and were hardworking and built communities in Ontario.

In my research, I discovered in the census of 1841-42, 1851, 1861, and right up to 1881, that when the birthplaces of all British North Americans were tallied up, Ireland recorded the largest number of those born outside the country. In the census of 1842, Upper Canada, now Ontario, had 78,255 Irish-born inhabitants, making them the largest non-indigenous group.

The Irish of the day were priests, ministers, farmers, labourers, tradesmen, merchants, lawyers, teachers and indeed politicians.

You may ask the question, "What is the most significant contribution to civilization the Irish have made?" It has often been stated that Ireland has produced a disproportionate number of scholars, orators and writers. The speeches of Edmund Burke and the speeches of playwright and speaker-orator Richard Brinsley Sheridan are manifestations of a rhetorical tradition central to the Irish sentiment and feelings. Mr Sean Conway, the member for Renfrew North, often imitates some of these traditions in the House here today.

The list of Irish artists and scholars goes back to Jonathan Swift, William Butler Yeats, Oscar Wilde, Samuel Beckett, James Joyce, Brendan Behan, Marshall McLuhan, and more recently, Conor McPherson, Martin McDonagh and Maeve Binchy.

The tradition of the Irish storyteller is well documented, and I can recall my father's ability to recite poetry at will and his love of books. My father's family boasted of his three sons who attended university, and indeed, my Uncle Alphonse O'Toole had two PhDs, one in mathematics and one in education. Their love of literature and culture is perhaps the greatest legacy of the Irish culture.

Like many people, and this happens today, some people are mischaracterized and misrepresented. I recall as a youth that the Irish were referred to as dogans or micks, hard drinkers, hard fighters, boxers and perhaps good sports, all brawn and — you know the rest. But when we think today — these characterizations are not helpful to any culture — we must look at the gifts and strengths of people and find positive common ground. No one is perfect.

My bill does not address the long struggle of all Irishmen. The religious arguments must be put aside. The time

has passed. The struggle over land, as characterized by the famous Irish film *The Field*, is all part of the history that we can learn from and resolve never to repeat. I would rather dwell on those things of a positive nature that we can agree on and move forward. I prefer to think of the beautiful Irish dancers, most recently the Riverdance group, the popular Leah family, the resurgence of Celtic studies, Irish humour and, of course, Irish whiskey, but just a dram — above all, just a dram.

Over the past few months, in consulting with a variety of Irish groups, I have been amazed by the depth of interest. Mr Pat Rooney of the Emerald Isle Seniors Society; Tiarnan and Marilyn Carter de Freine, editors of the *Toronto Irish News*; the Celtic Society at the University of Toronto; Stephen Clancy, the County Sligo Society; Steve Whelan of the United Irish Society of Canada.

The Ireland Fund of Canada, with its themes of Peace, Culture and Charity, perhaps best symbolizes all that is good about the Irish. This is a wonderful charitable organization. Their work gives me hope for the future of Ireland, north and south.

On March 17 of this year, I was pleased to make a presentation on behalf of our Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, the Honourable Isabel Bassett, to the Irish Person of the Year, Ms Peggy Delaney, a delightful person. Ms Delaney is a breath of spring and a wonderful lady. The spirit of that day was magical, and the St Patrick's Day parade was beautiful. What a great day to celebrate Irish Heritage Day. Everyone was Irish for a day.

Today, I believe, there are over 70 million Irish around the world, famous people like Timothy Eaton; Sid Ryan of CUPE; Darcy McKeough; the Irish-born Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, Hilary Weston, the first Irish-born Lieutenant Governor.

There are many decisions going on in Ireland today. On May 22, there will be a referendum on Ireland, north and south, with respect to the Good Friday agreement. I wish them luck in their discussions.

It would be a mistake if we did not recognize that a country that has struggled for years must be recognized and its traditions celebrated. Perhaps it is our differences that make us great.

As a Canadian of Irish descent, it is my duty, privilege and pleasure to present this bill to the House today.

Mr Bartolucci: The top of the morning to you, Speaker, and the best of the rest of the day to you all. You might wonder, what is an Italian doing standing up with an Irish brogue? Let me tell you that it's been said that imitation is the greatest form of flattery. Today we want to ensure that we flatter the Irish, not only in Ontario and in Canada but in the entire world.

Why would I want to be flattering the Irish? Let me give you a little bit of history. About 30 years ago, I met this young colleen by the name of Maureen. Now, Maureen is the eldest child of Van and Teresa. Teresa's maiden name was Mary Teresa Reilly. She was from Swinford in county Mayo in Ireland. I might suggest to you that Maureen and Van and Teresa exude the Irish

traditions that we spoke about in the House earlier and that we've lived for years and years and years.

Van and Teresa had a big family. There's Maureen and Lorraine; there's Jim and Carolyn; there's John, Michael and Barbie, all of whom are married and all of whom have either sons or daughters. This family, you can rest assured, whenever they gather at Teresa's house, I might suggest to you that the Clancy Brothers and the Irish music is playing well into the wee hours of the morning.

My father-in-law, Van, who is no longer with us but never forgotten, played the spoons — my God, he played the spoons. He loved playing the spoons. He tried to teach me how to play the spoons. Although I may be a good teacher, I was a lousy student. I continue to try and I only wish Van was here to help me. But I believe that my in-laws are the perfect example of what the Irish are. They're loving, they're caring, they're kind, they're compassionate, with a love of life and a love of laughter, and it is deeply rooted in faith and conviction.

The Sudbury Irish Heritage Club is much like my family in Sault Ste Marie. It was founded in 1959. It has a membership of approximately 300 and growing. I might suggest to you that they were instrumental in banding together and creating the Isles of Innisfree co-op housing project which is in Corsi Park off Copper Street. They're very, very active in our community and they ensure that the Irish traditions, the traditions that all of us are so proud of, are maintained and enhanced. In fact, you're invited on May 30 to the Isles of Innisfree in Sudbury for what's known as the Spudfest. Might I tell you it's a time of mingling and a time of enjoyment and a time of merriment. And, yes, there is music and there's song and there may be the odd beverage included.

1020

The week containing March 17 in Sudbury is a very, very important week. It's declared Irish Week in Sudbury and there are all kinds of activities which enliven, enrich and remind us of the importance of the Irish to our communities, to our province, to our country and to our world.

Might I suggest to you you're welcome to come to Sudbury any time during the week and hear what I would suggest are the two best Irish groups that I've ever heard, those being Patti's Patriots and the Friends of Erin. You can hear them at the Cambrian Foundation, you can hear them at the Ramada Inn, you can hear them at Grumblers, if you want, or they provide free concerts for people at the City Centre, the new Sudbury shopping centre. In fact, they want to share their music, so I invite you to come to Sudbury.

More importantly, I invite you to support this bill because this bill indeed enhances the appreciation we all have of the Irish culture, we all should have on an ongoing basis. I'm reminded of the beautiful Irish blessing that I'm sure every Irishman in the world has for everyone else, including the members on the government side and on this side of the House, when they say, "May you live as long as you want and never want for as long as you live."

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): In addressing this subject this morning, I want to begin by saying I can't

imagine, although I'm sure there are people out there, who could be any more proud of their heritage than I am. I'm an Irish immigrant to Canada, came to a place called Wawa in 1960 with my mother and father, five sisters and a brother. I remember it, but not so well as probably my mother. We arrived in Sault Ste Marie in the middle of the night in January — snow, cold — got up in the morning and caught the train through the Agawa Canyon up to a place called Hawk Junction and over to Wawa. We kids thought that we had died and gone to Disney World. I'm sure my mother had a different view of the whole situation, perhaps thought we were in Siberia, but nevertheless there we were.

In reflecting on my heritage and on my life and the fortunes that I have been gifted with, I think there are probably two things that a father, a mother or a set of parents can give to their children, and I have four who will be second-generation Irish in this wonderful country of Canada. Those two things are a sense of their roots — where they come from, the traditions in their family — and wings, an interest in the world, an excitement about life, some basic information so that they might discover from their roots how it is that they might participate in creating a world that is better and more fair and just than the one that we've turned over to them.

It's in that light this morning that I want to reflect for just a moment on the experience of the Irish in Canada and even before they came to Canada, back in the time when in fact most of the immigration happened. That was as a result of the Irish potato famine that I spoke of here only a few nights ago to share with the people who watch this channel and to share with the people in this House some of the difficulties that the people of that day experienced, why they experienced it and how some of it is so similar to what we're experiencing today in this great province.

Before I do that, though, I just want to share with you a quote from a little book that I quoted the other night as well, it's called *Famine Diary: Journey to a New World* by a fellow by the name of Gerald Keegan. In the foreword to the book by Don Mullan, the Peruvian theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez says:

Our view of the past must not be impelled by nostalgia but by hope. It is not a fixation on the painful and traumatic events of the past but rather a concern about contemporary poverty and a conviction that only a people which has retained its memory can change its situation and build a better world.

That's why I suggest to you that the experience of the Irish in this country, which was such a difficult experience — and if you talk to anybody, particularly in this great city of Toronto, who remembers, and I know there are events that are celebrated each year in Toronto that recall some of the experience of the early Irish — it was a very difficult time and it was not in any way an easy life they lived in arriving in this new world; and that in remembering that struggle and remembering the coming together of people around particular issues and the sickness and the death that took place, we might not repeat that page of our history and we might not, now that new immigrants come

to this country from other places, impose on them the same hardship, the same troubles that were imposed on the early Irish immigrants when they came to this country; and that to understand that anything we do to people in need in our province today out there by way of cuts to their source of income would be the kind of thing that would have been done back then to the Irish because they were the immigrants, they were the poor, they were those who were at the door of the establishment asking for work, asking for opportunity, asking for a way to provide for their families, themselves and their neighbours.

It behooves us to remember that, but not to get stuck in it, not to get so preoccupied with the difficulties and the hardship and the deaths that occurred that we get frozen in time so that we're not able to rise above and respond to the call of people like Gutierrez when he says that hope must be the overarching, the overriding sentiment with which we view this.

I think it's important today that all of us who have Irish ancestry, all of us who have ancestry of various cultural backgrounds in this country, recognize that, remember that and sometimes actually bring it to the fore in a way that causes us to celebrate, and to tell stories that perhaps sometimes aren't quite only the truth is valuable to the culture that we now develop for our own children and for Ontario and for Canada.

My own experience of coming to Canada and arriving in Wawa was actually quite a wonderful experience. We were told in Ireland before we came to Canada, in all the stories and the songs that were written, that in North America and particularly — New York was the place that most people wanted to go, but some of us ended up in Canada because that's where our relatives ended up and we followed suit. Coming to Canada, I have to tell you, was probably the best decision my father could have made for the lives of me and my siblings and for my children.

Arriving in Wawa, we did in fact find a new world, a world where Irish, both Protestant and Catholic, got together, partied, celebrated and supported each other in the very difficult task of dealing with the challenges that are presented to anybody who lives in a small northern Ontario community, particularly back in the 1960s when we didn't have many of the conveniences of today to cause us to become insular and independent and individualistic.

In that little town called Wawa, we had a community of international root and history. I remember my father going to work at the plant and talking about the fellow he met from Germany and the Ukrainian and the French Canadian, and the Polish hall that was established in that community where we celebrated most of the weddings and New Year's Eve dances, where we, as young people, went to school with the children of those immigrants and, through the celebration of the various feast days of the different cultures and nationalities, came to understand and respect and appreciate and in some way grow out of that experience.

That made us, I suppose, the kind of Canadians who will be able to best deal with some of the diversity that we find in our country today that causes so many of us out

there such pain, as we try to come to terms with the questions of what does it mean to be Canadian and how do you define the Canadian experience and what is the Canadian experience and how can we take the best of what is Canada.

1030

Our history — recognizing that this country was and is built on three nations of people, the English, the French and our first Canadians, our first nations, but contributing to that mix are all those who arrived later in time with our own experience of life, with our own cultures, our own religions and we put that into the mix. Where in other parts of the world that causes strife to the point where people actually hurt each other and in some places go to the extreme of killing each other, in Canada we've found a way to be appreciative, for the most part, of the contribution that each group can make.

I suggested a few minutes ago the story of the Irish coming to Canada, particularly in such large numbers, around the time of the great Irish famine. It certainly wasn't easy, because there were so many of us who came, and we were so needy, so poor. There was, because of the long trip across the ocean, so much disease among us that the then inhabitants of Canada were very afraid, were very frightened, and did not open their doors readily to this new wave of immigrant people. In spite of that, we stayed and we survived and we thrived. I believe we are now a very important and positive part of that fabric that is Ontario today, that is Canada today, that the rest of the world looks at and envies and wishes they could emulate or duplicate in some significant and concrete and real way.

To spend some time today in this House to reflect for a moment on the contribution, the history of the Irish people to this great country of ours, I think is really important and really timely. On this occasion I thank the member for Durham East, Mr O'Toole. He and I don't always see eye to eye on everything, but this morning we certainly agree on this: that we should together, as a House elected by the people of Ontario, recognize the valuable contribution of a particular portion as it blends into the mix of all the other very important and valuable groups of people who make up the communities and the cities and the towns and the province that we live in.

In wrapping up, as I'm wont to do here from time to time — because I do read a bit in my role as a member in this House so that I might understand more fully how I might participate in a way that's helpful and positive, and challenge this place sometimes to remember where it is that we come from, so that we don't repeat it in a negative way now or in the future, but that in learning from it we might create that better world that the theologian Gutierrez talked about in my opening quote. In this little book it goes on to say:

"It would not be proper to end this story without at least a brief reference to the survivors of famine, pestilence and the hardships of travel. In their search for ways and means of earning a living, they got no help of any kind from the government. In fact, they were completely rejected by the predominantly British population of Upper

Canada. Being Irish and being poor they were not wanted. It was almost impossible to get a bit of land fit for cultivation. All the choice lands had already been given to the United Empire Loyalists or selectively distributed by land agents to people they considered loyal to the crown. The only alternative was to clear patches of land in the dense forests or else take on slave labour on the railroads, in the mines or in the forests. But they were used to hardship and they succeeded in earning a living while making substantial contributions to the development of Canada. A remarkable number of them and their descendants rose to positions of distinction in church and state and in commerce and industry." Today, we hail and recognize and thank them for that.

Mr Morley Kells (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): It's my pleasure to rise to speak on the private member's bill which will proclaim March 17 annually as Irish Heritage Day. My colleagues and I are going to split the time we have available.

Today it is my intention, along with my colleagues, to extol the family values that the people of Irish descent originally brought to Ontario when it was still constituted as Upper Canada.

In the process of doing research in this regard, I located in my library the two volumes of *The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada*, which is a compilation of a number of articles and essays dealing with the arrival of the Irish on our shores long before Confederation in 1867. But before I quote directly from these sources, I would like to provide a few personal anecdotes about my own Irish heritage.

As a youngster growing up in the 1940s in Toronto I chummed with the Murphys in my neighbourhood. Mr Murphy was a tailor who worked on the dining room table in his home with his legs crossed all day long cutting and sewing. He said to me, "Your last name is Kells and you must be from Ballymena." Not realizing what he was talking about, I answered that no, I was from the village of Waverley, which is located close to Midland on Georgian Bay. Mr Murphy went on to explain about the possibility and geographical location of my Irish roots, and so at the age of 10 I learned that I was not only a Canadian but a Canadian with ancestors from across the sea. From that point on I began to take a greater interest in things Irish and to ask questions of my parents about my ancestry.

I suspect my little story has parallels with many members of this Legislature. With this in mind, I found out that my mother's maiden name is McWatters and that her mother was a Brown and they both considered themselves to be of Irish extraction. Surprisingly enough, after many inquiries I was able to ascertain that nobody knew exactly where they were from in Ireland and when and why their ancestors travelled to Canada to start a new life.

As I grew older, I began to research and eventually wrote a booklet on the McWatters family for use at a family reunion in 1976. The family Bibles revealed that on my mother's side my great-grandfather, Samuel Brown, was born in the Port Hope area in 1841 and that he homesteaded in Tay township near Midland. Other Bibles inform me that my other great-grandfather, William

Albert McWatters, was born in Cartwright, Ontario, in 1869 and that he moved to Medonte township, adjacent to Tay, where my grandmother and grandfather met and were married in 1893.

Consulting my book on the Irish in Canada, it indicates that between 1825 and 1845 the Irish constituted 60% of all arrivals. At the time of Confederation, Canadians of Irish origin were the second-largest group after French Canadians in the country.

Reviewing the maps provided shows that Irish immigration did not take place along the shores of Lake Ontario and Lake Erie simply because that land went to United Empire Loyalists after 1812 and early English settlers before that. The Irish came later and obtained tracts of land further north, including the many townships that make up Simcoe county.

Contrary to popular belief, it wasn't the potato famines that drove the Irish in great numbers to Canada. Although the maps show that most Irish immigration took place before the potato famine, the Irish immigration was certainly bolstered by the aforementioned potato crop failures in the 1840s.

One of the articles informs us:

"For a country of its size and population, Ireland has indeed had a remarkable influence. Its success in restoring the light of Christianity and classical learning after the Dark Ages is well known. Its contribution through its many religious orders to the education of millions of children in Africa, Asia, Australasia, and the Americas is second to none."

In the epilogue to the introduction, the editor, Robert O'Driscoll, refers to a conversation that he had with a bus driver in rural Ontario, who advised him that if you're interested in the Irish of Ontario you should go over to Phelpston, which is a typical Irish village. The bus driver said, "They'd rather fight than eat."

The bus driver was born in Elmvale, which is five miles from Phelpston, and his reference to the Irish Catholics of that village is typical of the attitudes that once prevailed in that area. I know this well, for indeed almost 100% of my relatives from my mother and father's time came from this region with its towns and villages. Fortunately, time has ameliorated the prejudices that sprang from the ages-old conflicts in the mother isle.

1040

I could say a great deal more about the combative relationship between the twin religious cultures, but this is not the purpose of this bill. The most important thing is that early in the 20th century Canadians learned quickly that peaceful cohabitation was much preferable to any kind of antagonism. Indeed, as this century comes to an end, the old irritations have ceased to exist here once and for all.

I think my time is going on me, so I will cut down a bit and say that there is something whimsical about being of Irish descent. Many third- and fourth-generation Canadians like myself have journeyed to Ireland to look for the specifics that support the inner feelings of intimacy we harbour for the soil where our forefathers laboured, raised

their families and watched as their children migrated to the new land across the sea.

Upon reflection, I find that being Irish is not about nationalism, nor about historical antagonisms, but rather it is about feeling — a feeling of belonging, of relating to people and a place. Personally, a deep quiet feeling of satisfaction overwhelms me when I think of this, because I know I have roots beyond these shores. It's because of this that I am so pleased to be able to speak in support of an Irish Heritage Day and ask that you vote to make this a reality.

In a society that is becoming more broadly diverse each and every year, it is propitious that we stop once a year to add another dimension to St Patrick's Day, that of an unspoken, continual annual tribute to that ancient race of people known as the Irish. God bless them all.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): It's with great pleasure that I rise to join the debate on this bill declaring March 17 as Irish Heritage Day, known to the rest of us, of course, as St Paddy's Day, a day on which everyone, certainly in the community I live in, becomes Irish for a day. Such is the generosity of the people.

My name is Cullen. It's a contraction of Cu'ullen. It's a very Irish name. It means "of Ulster." Just to lend some perspective to the heritage we're talking about, the first Cullen was the bastard son of the high king of Ulster. He was known as the Hound of Ulster and he grew up to be a fine Irish hero and a giant.

Such was his fame that at one time when his enemies attacked him, he put his back to a tree and for three days and three nights he fought off his enemies. The dead mounded around him and such was the carnage that was going on around him that they withdrew. When they withdrew, for three days and three nights they stood there watching this giant, and it wasn't until a raven landed on his head and pecked out his eye that they realized they'd been fighting each other, killing each other all this time.

I'm just saying this because it shows some of the colour of the heritage of Ireland. It is not always leprechauns and wee folk. It is a history that goes back into pre-Roman times, and I'm pleased to say that my family forms part of that history.

Of course, Ulster forms part of the four kingdoms of Ireland: Ulster, Leinster, Munster and Connaught. I have to tell you again that members of this House will recognize the red hand of Ulster. It so happens that back in those days the tribes of Ulster would go off to one of the western isles to elect the high king of Ulster. Politics being what it is, members of this House will appreciate that from time to time they would not be able to make a decision between two very strong candidates. The legend has it that it was resolved. The Irish always love a good competition. They suggested to the two claimants for the high kingship that the first one to reach the shores of Ulster and touch the shores of Ulster would become the high king of Ulster.

The race was set and the two boats went off, the tribe of one claimant and the tribe of the other claimant straining to get back to the shores of Ulster. One ship pulled a little farther ahead. The chieftain in the other boat took out

his sword, cut off his hand and threw it across. His hand touched Ulster first and he became the high king — and not a word of a lie.

This all goes to show the kind of legends that grew out of Ulster, the giants that strode the land, Finn McCool and others that formed the very colourful heritage that is in Ireland and that many of its immigrants have brought to our land and to many others.

I mentioned that my family name is Cullen. My father came to this country following the war. His name was Henry Patrick Joseph Francis Conluth Cornelius Cullen, a fine Irish name. He came from a family that had been very active in the struggle for the independence of Ireland. I wear my grandfather's ring. It's green. He participated in that struggle. As a matter of fact, when he died in Ireland the president of the republic, Eamon de Valera, came to his funeral.

I have many cousins in Ireland. I have been to Ireland myself. I'm very pleased to have met my cousins, Fidelma, Fionnuala, Porric; lovely, wonderful people. I've travelled in Ireland, and I have to tell you they are very friendly people, very pleased to know that I came from Canada. Very often I would stop in the village and someone would come up to me and say, "Well, where are you from?" I would say, "I'm from Canada." "Oh, Canada, do you know me cousin in Halifax?" Unfortunately in Ireland they don't realize the tremendous size of this country. I have yet to be to Halifax, and they're quite surprised. Everyone in Ireland knows everyone else.

One of the interesting things in my life, in travelling through Ireland, is recognizing the vast history of it. I'm very pleased to say that in Ottawa we share that history as well. Of course, Ottawa was made famous not only by being the nation's capital, but also because of the canal that was built so long ago, yes, by Colonel By, but the trenches were all dug by Irish navvies who came to this country and helped build the canals, the railways, literally helped build this country.

I could go on for a long time about the contribution the Irish people have made to our country. I will save that for other times because I know many other members here want to contribute to this debate.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I congratulate my colleague the member for Durham East in bringing forth this private member's bill and for his foresight in realizing that probably more than half of this Legislature is made up of people whose heritage dates back to Irish descendants. If they don't claim Irish heritage, then probably they were married to someone who has that background, or they just want to be Irish. Not only in this House do we have the O'Tooles, the McGuintys and the Sheehans, but we also have the O'Harrises and McEves.

The idea of an Irish Heritage Day is a wonderful idea and very special to me because of my family heritage. The name Stewart is usually associated with Scottish heritage. In my particular instance, my heritage can be traced back to 1608, when under James I of England, William Stewart was asked to take the task of settling Presbyterians in Ulster, Ireland.

Now, it happens that 200 years later, in 1828, another William Stewart of county Monaghan, Ireland, became the first Stewart ancestor to settle at Stewart Hall in Peterborough, Ontario. William, who was 47, arrived with his wife and seven children. The Stewart family chose to settle first in Cavan township and one year later moved across the Otonabee River and settled in Peterborough county. His younger brother, Alexander, accompanied William's family, and they were later followed by another brother, Richard, in 1829 with his wife and child. It is to this brother Richard that I am directly related. Three brothers and several sisters remained in Ireland near the village of Drum, Cootehill, county Monaghan. As well, some of the children chose to come to Canada at a later date.

The south end of Otonabee township is a peninsula of land enclosed on three sides by the Otonabee River, which flows towards Rice Lake. In the centre of this peninsula is a high ridge of fertile land, which is where my family of Presbyterian Irish heritage settled. My descendants chose to live close to the established Peter Robinson Irish settlement of Peterborough. Land was purchased for \$500 for 200 acres, and thus their farm and their home in the new land had begun.

I am the fifth generation of Irish Stewarts to continue to raise family, work and enjoy living in the Peterborough area. My grandchildren are therefore the seventh generation of Stewarts to be raised in Peterborough county. I suggest they might be classed as pure Canadians but with Irish roots.

1050

The original town of Peterborough began when the Honourable Peter Robinson brought 2,000 Irish immigrants to the then Newcastle district in 1825. The original settlement housed the immigrants in rough huts and shelters until they were able to leave for their final destinations in the townships. Of course many of these settlers stayed in the town of Peterborough to establish thriving businesses such as farriers, dry goods and indeed pubs. The townships of Ennismore and Douro in Peterborough county were settled by Irish Catholic families in the early 1800s and to this day the surnames of these settlers still make up our communities. So began one of the many Irish settlements throughout southeastern and central Ontario. I'm sure every MPP in this Legislature has similar stories.

Both Irish Protestants and Irish Catholics have shaped the very essence of our province. Those immigrants proved to be hardworking, hard-playing, family-oriented individuals who helped shape our municipalities. They had an unquestionable work ethic. Their motto was, and I quote, "Work hard and be rewarded."

These Irish men and women came to Canada with the hope for a new beginning for their families. They established themselves in this province and became first and foremost Canadians. They accepted our way of life and added a rich culture that lives on through their ancestors. The rich heritage of Irish immigrants, our forefathers, is part of Canada and can easily be lost if we allow it. We should remember the contribution of these people with the proclamation of March 17 as Irish Heritage Day.

I leave you with one thought. As the great Irish philosopher Murphy once said, "If you don't agree with what I am saying, it's just because you aren't listening."

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I'm sure this act proclaiming Irish Heritage Day will have unanimous agreement. How could we not do it? Looking into the eyes of all those Irish members here today, it would be very, very hard to do.

That reminds me of the international song:

When Irish eyes are smiling
Sure it's like a morn in spring,
In the lilt of Irish laughter
You can hear the angels sing.
When Irish hearts are happy
All the world seems bright and gay,
And when Irish eyes are smiling
Sure they steal your heart away.

I've heard in these comments today of the great contribution Irish Canadians have made to the development of this country. I'm more familiar with the Toronto community and consequently I've done some research for a book called Toronto's Many Faces. I'd like to give you some background on how the Irish have contributed so much.

"In the foyer of the world-famous Eaton Centre, a bronze statue honours one of Toronto's best-known Irish Canadians. Timothy Eaton was an Irish-born merchant who turned his Toronto dry goods store into Canada's largest privately owned department store," employing more than 9,000 people. "Today, the Timothy Eaton Memorial Church on St Clair Avenue West stands as a reminder of the contributions of the great Irish Torontonian.

"Irish settlers have lived in Canada since the early 17th century. The Irish may have constituted" at that time "as much as 5% of the population of New France, and during the 18th century, the Irish began to settle in the new British colonies. More Irish settlers were among the Loyalists who arrived in Canada following the American Revolution.

"The potato crop failure and famines in Ireland in the 1840s resulted in a large number of settlers arriving in Toronto. Early Irish working-class neighbourhoods along Toronto's waterfront and the Don basin were called Slab Town, Paddy Town and Cork Town. Irish Claretown developed around Bathurst and Queen streets, and by the 1890s the Junction area of West Toronto became home to many Irish." Remember Cabbagetown? That is "reputed to have been named for the Irish working class who planted cabbages in their front yards.

"The first Irish Catholic churches in the city were St Paul's in Cabbagetown, St Michael's Cathedral, St Basil's Church, and the original St Patrick's Church, established in the 1860s. These churches were centres of education and social activities. The pioneer charitable organization was the St Vincent de Paul Society whose members also founded the Toronto Savings Bank and the Catholic Children's Aid Society.

"In the 1850s, St Michael's College, now part of the University of Toronto, became a seminary school, under the Basilian Fathers to provide higher education for Irish Catholics. The Christian Brothers established De La Salle as a secondary and commercial school, complementing the schools of the Sisters of Loretto, and of St Joseph. St Michael's Hospital was opened in the late 19th century by the Sisters of St Joseph... followed by the establishment of St Joseph's and Our Lady of Mercy hospitals.

"In the second half of the 19th century, there were a large number of Ulster Protestants living in the city. Lodges of the Orange Order, a predominantly Protestant society, [were] founded in 1795.... The main meeting halls were the Eastern Orange Hall on Queen Street, as well as the Western District Orange Hall on Euclid Avenue. The lodges provided social services, health care and illness and death benefits. The needy received additional aid from the Ladies Loyal True Blues and the Irish Protestant Benevolent Association.

"Irish Torontonians have contributed greatly to the city's development in the political, business and sports sectors. The first...mayor, W.H. Boulton, took office in 1845 and, during the rest of the century, 20 of Toronto's 23 mayors...." were Irish. "Among Toronto's most popular sports figures were the late King Clancy and former Canadian boxing champion and Olympic silver medalist Shawn O'Sullivan."

Today in Metro Toronto, we have some 550,000 people of Irish ancestry. Of course, we know the community has many cultural, charitable, social and sporting organizations, many of Gaelic names, and there are many, many more pages of contributions Irish-Canadians have made.

I am very happy today not only to support this bill but to have stood in this House and listened to and heard many of the members and their personal stories, which were very heart-rending. I am delighted to support this bill and I know my party will do it. I'm very happy that it will receive unanimous agreement today. For the Irish today I would only hope —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Further debate?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): As a member of this Legislature I am pleased to support the bill brought forward by my friend and colleague the honourable member for Durham East, Mr O'Toole, designating March 17 as Irish Heritage Day in Ontario.

There is a great history of the Irish in Canada, as has been recounted here. There was a generation of Irish who came to this country — there's a wonderful book called *Flight from Famine, The Coming of the Irish to Canada*, by Donald MacKay, in which he documents:

"About a million Irish left for Canada in the span of one generation. Thousands died of typhus or cholera at sea or in the notorious quarantine stations at Grosse Isle, Quebec and Saint John, New Brunswick, where heroic doctors and priests tried to ease their suffering, sometimes at the cost of their own lives."

My own family arrived in Saint John, New Brunswick, in the 1830s, starting off with the preferred name at the time, James, which continues to the present day — James Flaherty from Ireland and Mary Murphy from Ireland. On the other side, James Harquail, again a preferred name, and Mary Carroll, who came from Cork in 1845. That followed through to the present generation, through New Brunswick and Lower Canada and to what is now Upper Canada, so that today there are many of us in Canada and in the United States by the Flaherty family name, including my own siblings, David Harris, Edwin Harquail, Ann Isabel, Gerald Francis, Terrence Patrick, Norah Clare and Mary Stella, all of us the progeny of Edwin Benedict Flaherty, born in Vancouver, British Columbia, and Mary Monica Harquail, born in Campbellton, New Brunswick. All of that by way of history.

But it goes back much farther than that. There's a wonderful book written several centuries ago by Roderic O'Flaherty, published in 1684, which is a history of the west of Connaught. One can find that in a lovely bookstore in the city of Galway called Kenny's, where one can review the book and obtain a copy of it. It is a wonderful history of the west of Ireland, which is where the Flaherty family is from.

As you come out of the bookstore — I've researched this on location — if you go just a tad south and a little west, there is another hospitable place called A Bunch of Grapes. You can visit that also, about 6 in the evening, with the Kenny brothers. They will be happy to explain most of what's in this book to you directly and personally. Then if you want an excursion, you can travel north from the city of Galway into the county of Galway and visit the Flaherty family castle, which is near Ballynahinch.

The Flaherty family continues to get together. That happens each year somewhere in North America. I'm very pleased that my siblings and our mother will get together this year in the province of Ontario to visit the beautiful Thousand Islands in July as we continue the wonderful history of the Irish in Canada.

1100

Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East): I only have a few seconds. I just want to show the members today an Irish newspaper printed on fine Irish linen which contains a very brief Irish blessing. I will conclude my remarks by simply reading to you some of the words on here:

"May the wind always be at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face and the rains falls soft upon your fields. And until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand."

Mr Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa East): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: What a coincidence, and maybe a paradox, that Mr O'Toole's bill is numbered Bill 8, because back in 1986, another Bill 8 was approved unanimously by this House. That was the French Language Services Act. Since then my motto has been, "Live and let live in harmony."

The Speaker: You better knock all this lovin' off. This is making me sick.

Mr O'Toole: I'd like to thank the many members for their wonderful, noble comments with respect to Bill 8, and of course their endorsement of the bill.

I would also like to thank the O'Toole family — that's my own family on all sides — as well as Alex Roman, the researcher who did a considerable amount of work, and Mr and Mrs O'Neil, who took time out of their busy day and busy life to come and enjoy the speeches from the many members.

All cultures can document their struggle in their journey to the place they are now. It's not unique to the Irish, it's not unique to any culture, but it's important to remember where you're from. As we always say, if you don't learn from history, you're doomed to repeat it.

The Irish themselves, north and south, will decide on May 22 where they go from here on their journey. It's important that they look back to the support of all Irishmen. Indeed, all countries are struggling with their identity, and at this time of year we should put our hearts together and go forward in a positive vein.

In a positive vein, the member for Wentworth North stole my concluding blessing, but I do have the odd blessing as well which I'll share with the members. The Irish are well known for their many little blessings and virtues, some of which have been shared today. Perhaps the members would join me. At the moment I'm waiting for them to join me.

"May your pockets be heavy and your heart be light." Another one we say is, "May you be in heaven half an hour before the devil knows you're dead."

There are many members, and I'd like all members to join me in singing:

When Irish eyes are smiling
Sure it's like a morn in spring,
In the lilt of Irish laughter
You can hear the angels sing.
When Irish hearts are happy
All the world seems bright and gay,
And when Irish eyes are smiling
Sure they steal your heart away.

The Speaker: Good timing.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (LICENCE SUSPENSIONS), 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (SUSPENSIONS DE PERMIS)

Mr Grimmer moved second reading of the following Bill:

Bill 5, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to the suspension of drivers' licences / *Projet de loi 5, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les suspensions de permis de conduire.*

Mr Bill Grimmer (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): It's certainly a privilege, and a privilege that's remarkable for an MPP, to have the opportunity to introduce a private

member's bill. I feel particularly privileged to have the opportunity to introduce a bill that I feel would have a significant benefit to my riding of Muskoka-Georgian Bay.

Bill 5, unlike the previous bill, is on a little more sober topic, I think, and that is the issue of boating safety in Ontario. Boating safety is a topic of great interest in my riding of Muskoka-Georgian Bay. Muskoka and the Georgian Bay part of my riding are among the most popular boating destinations for tourists in Canada, indeed in North America. In the summer months in Muskoka-Georgian Bay, recreational boating not only is a tremendous source of recreational pleasure for the people who live there year-round, but it's also a significant economic benefit to the area. People who come to Muskoka-Georgian Bay to participate in recreational boating have a big impact on the economy, and many of us who live there full-time make our living by catering to people who are there because of the lakes and rivers. That tremendous natural bounty of surface water is the reason a lot of people have decided to have a cottage or to spend their weekends in Muskoka-Georgian Bay. For that reason it's important that I, as the representative for that area, with my private member's bill, try as much as possible to promote further recreational activity in Muskoka-Georgian Bay. I haven't been able to think of a better way to do that than to assure the boating public that in Ontario the waterways are safe to boat on, not only in the daytime but also in the evening and at night.

Just to summarize the contents of the bill, many people in Ontario are unaware that if they're convicted of impaired operation of a boat, they do not have as serious a penalty as if they were being convicted of impaired operation of a car or snowmobile. Currently if you're convicted of impaired operation of a car or snowmobile in Ontario, you face the suspension of your driver's licence. That is a very serious sanction in our society because of the importance a driver's licence has come to take on. Virtually everyone over the age of 16 in Ontario values their driver's licence and uses it on a regular basis, and it is my feeling that threatening the loss of that privilege has a big impact on attitudes.

In the time that I have been a driver of a car, attitudes about drinking and driving have changed significantly, and I think that is directly tied to the penalties in the law. I don't think that attitudes on drinking and driving have changed simply because people think it's the wrong thing to do; I think it's directly related to the fact that they will lose their driver's licence if they're caught and convicted of impaired operation of a car or of a snowmobile.

This bill would bring in the same penalties for a person convicted of operating a vessel while impaired as currently apply to persons convicted of operating a car or a snowmobile. It would also allow the police to suspend the driver's licence of a person who is charged with impaired operation of a vessel immediately upon the charge being laid, and it would allow the police to suspend that person's driver's licence if they blew a warning on a roadside breathalyser device.

Both sanctions are very important. I know from talking to the police, they feel that the 12-hour suspension may be even more important than the suspension of the driver's licence on conviction, because in a lot of cases I think the public feels that if a person is blowing a warning on the roadside breathalyser, they should not be allowed to leave the scene and get in a car and drive. I think the police obviously feel the same way and would like to suspend that person's privilege of driving a vehicle for a 12-hour period. That would ensure that the person would get home safely without endangering the rest of the public on the highway.

1110

Currently, in speaking with police marine operators, I think there is an improving climate in Ontario as far as the tools the police have to deal with boating infractions and bad boating habits. The Ontario Community Council on Impaired Driving, an umbrella body that brings together all the various groups in this province that are against impaired operation of a variety of vehicles, had their launch this week because we have the holiday weekend coming up beginning tomorrow. They had their launch of the season and their campaign against impaired driving. At that launch, there were marine police officers from several different forces in Ontario. They all feel that the new federal-provincial partnership that allows marine police to lay marine charges under the Provincial Offences Act has helped them a great deal.

I have received some statistics from the Ontario Provincial Police on their waterways policing in the past two years. I think the public would be encouraged to know that contrary to some suggestions that there is less presence by the police on the waterways, in fact the presence of the police has increased. In 1996, the OPP records show that 35,297 hours were expended by the Ontario Provincial Police on marine patrol. In 1997, there was a significant increase of over 3,000 more hours as they expended 38,897 hours on marine patrol by the OPP in 1997. That's a significant increase.

There is also a relative increase in the number of boating charges laid by the OPP. In 1996, 2,292 boating charges were laid; in 1997, a significant increase to 2,442 boating charges. That is a reflection of the police operating with better tools. From talking to the police about Bill 5, I'm going to take a risk here and suggest that every police officer in Ontario thinks this bill is a very good idea. It will give them the kinds of tools they need when they deal with an impaired or a suspected impaired operator of a vessel on the water.

They want to make sure they can suspend their licence for 12 hours so there's no risk of them being out on the highway during the 12-hour period following the time of the arrest. They also want to make sure they have a strong deterrent out there that people will consider before they drink and operate their vessel.

I've received a lot of supportive mail and faxes. Perhaps when I summarize I'll note who those supporters are. I also received a couple of faxes just this morning. One of

them is from the Canadian Safe Boating Council. I'll just read it into the record; it's not very long:

"The Canadian Safe Boating Council represents over 60 national and regional organizations working for better boating safety. We have supported many initiatives aimed at meeting our goals, including significant changes to legislation and regulation.

"Naturally, as a safe boating council, we are interested in reducing the number of deaths attributed to boating each year. A significant portion of these deaths include alcohol consumption as a contributing factor.

"Our organization welcomes your proposal to link suspension of the provincial automobile driver's licence to the federal Criminal Code sanctions already in place.

"The council feels that a strong message delivered to boaters across Canada, and especially in Ontario, which accounts for about half of all recreational boating in Canada, will reduce the number of boating fatalities significantly. Thank you for your work in delivering this message."

Those are the remarks I'd like to make for now. I'm interested in hearing my colleagues' remarks.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I appreciate the opportunity to spend a few moments discussing Bill 5. I commend the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay for bringing it forward. I will certainly be supporting it. Weather records indicate that Sudbury is one of the sunniest areas in Ontario. It has a recorded higher annual average sunshine per hour than London, Hamilton, Sault Ste Marie and North Bay, so obviously the people in Sudbury are attuned to going outside and enjoying the great outdoors. The regional municipality within its boundaries has in excess of 90 named lakes. It may surprise the members of the House, but within the city of Sudbury itself there are 30 named lakes — that's 30 within the boundaries of the city of Sudbury.

Sudbury's Ramsey Lake, which is the most populated lake in the area, has won the 1992 International Excellence on the Waterfront award for any region or any city. It is the largest city-contained lake in North America, featuring both leisure living and all forms of water activity and recreation. Within the heart of the city of Sudbury is Ramsey Lake, and it is only 1,500 metres from a very vibrant civic square or the seat of local government.

Those are some of the reasons I'm going to be supporting this legislation, because the people in Sudbury, the city and the region, believe that those who operate vessels or boats on the waterways of Ontario should operate them in a very mature, responsible manner. I'm suggesting that if you're operating a vessel when you're impaired, that's not being responsible and it's not being very mature.

I should let the House know that the Sudbury Regional Police Service is very active on the lake within the regional municipality of Sudbury and is supportive of this bill, because it will allow every police officer to thoroughly enforce the proper operation of vessels. The police forces in Sudbury, both the regional police force and the OPP, are on our lakes and they do manage them very effectively. We don't have a major problem with regard to

safety, but this bill will reinforce their presence and will afford them the opportunity to do meaningful enforcement and, if charges are necessary, make meaningful charges.

I would suggest to all the members of the House that we who take part in recreation in or on the water must be protected. Bill 5 offers those of us who may be swimming, those of us who may be water-skiing, those of us who may be doing other forms such as fishing within the lakes and rivers in Ontario, the opportunity for maximum safety. How can that be wrong?

I suggest to you that with the inclusion of Sea-Doos on the waterways of Ontario we have very unique problems being posed to us. Bill 5 will ensure that those individuals who are operating Sea-Doos do so in a very responsible and professional manner.

In summation, I would suggest that this bill is timely; I would suggest that this bill is necessary; I would suggest that this bill will be well received within the communities of Ontario that have recreation on or in our waterways; and I would suggest that this bill should become law as quickly as possible, to ensure the maximum safety on our waterways within this province. I thank the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay for bringing this bill forward.

1120

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I rise in support of Bill 5. I congratulate Mr Grimmert for bringing it forward today.

I am a city dweller. Everybody here knows that I don't use motorized boats, but I do like to go on canoe trips and have for a number of years been portaging those big canoes over my head for kilometres and kilometres —

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Lots of strength.

Ms Churley: Yes, I may look small — with a great backpack on and going as deeply into the lakes and as far up north as I can get to get away from people.

Mr Gary Fox (Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings): To get away from constituents.

Ms Churley: That's one of the advantages, especially in this profession. Every now and then, when you're on holiday, the main thing you want to do is, for a little while, just get away from your good friends in the Legislature. You certainly wouldn't want to run into any of them way up north, would you, at those times?

But I'm finding now that it's getting harder and harder to get away from motorized boats. Certainly we're all aware that there have been deaths in Ontario, in Quebec and in other places, partly as a result of Sea-Doos. I realize that they are of major concern and you're not addressing those specifically today, but hopefully this will help that situation to some extent.

I applaud the fact that you're bringing this bill forward and say that it's a long time coming. It's something that really should have been done a long time ago.

I'm sure, Mr Grimmert, that in your riding this is an issue of great concern because you come from the Muskoka area where there are a lot of boaters. I know a lot of people from the city go to Muskoka and other areas and get out in their boats. Most people, like in every situation, do not break the law and drive their boats safely. But as in

every situation there are always those who don't and certainly those are the people whom this bill tries to capture.

When they go out on their Sea-Doos or other motorized boats, if they do drink, if they're driving dangerously, they endanger the life of myself out there in a canoe or out swimming. In some locations now in Ontario it is terrifying to be out in a canoe or to be swimming in the lake when there are a lot of motorized boats around. You just don't know who's being responsible and who isn't. Some of these, particularly the Sea-Doos, go so fast and come at you so quickly that it can be very frightening. I don't know if people here in this House have experienced that, been out in a canoe and been surrounded by a lot of these motorized boats. It is quite frightening.

Perhaps the member can respond to one of the concerns. I'd like to have more information on the policing, especially in his area and other areas. A bill is only as good as the enforcement around it. As we know, if we have strong regulations and we have strong laws in place, they're no good, they mean nothing unless the government of the day commits the enforcement, the policing that's necessary to catch the people. I would say to you that all of those people who go out in their boats and drive carefully and are responsible would applaud this move as well. I think, however, that we must have assurances that it's going to mean something, that it isn't just a piece of paper and that once a law is passed and the enforcement isn't there, people realize it very quickly and the law therefore is there to be broken.

I very much support the private member's bill that's before us today. Even though it's private members' hour, I believe I can speak on behalf of all of my caucus on this. We're very happy that it's here before us today. I hope and believe everybody in the House will support this.

When Mr Grimmert responds later on, perhaps he can talk a little bit about the enforcement and assure us, and I hope that his government will agree as well, that we can pass this bill without delay. I'm sure you will have the support of this caucus to move forward and that you will have the support of your government to put the necessary enforcement in place so that we know that our waters will be safe as a result of this bill.

I would say to Mr Grimmert, if that's the case, he can indeed be very proud. If he is able to get this bill passed through the House and it actually is enforced, I believe lives could be saved as a result. Again, I congratulate the member for bringing this forward and assure him that he has my full support.

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): This morning I stand in this Legislature in support of the efforts of my colleague the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay to bring safety to Ontario's waterways. I realize Bill Grimmert, the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay, brought this same bill forward last year, but if something is worth saying, it's worth saying twice. This bill is certainly worth repeating in this Legislature.

I don't need to remind anyone that I have been an advocate for safe boating for many years and I have

certainly repeated my cause many times before you all. My resolution, which was passed in this Legislature last September, called on the government of Canada to immediately amend the Canada Shipping Act as it relates to small vessel regulations. That marked the fifth time I have stood in this Legislature advocating boater safety in Ontario and I still refuse to give up on that issue, because I believe boater education will reduce accidents on Ontario's waterways.

Last month the federal government finally announced a government licensing program, but to my disappointment, the program will not come into effect until January 1, 1999, not in time for this boating season.

This weekend we will once again be joining our constituents to kick off the summer season in Ontario. As we travel to our favourite body of water to play and enjoy our outdoor programs, we must ever be conscious of the inexperienced, careless and sometimes intoxicated watercraft operators. Alcohol consumption is not tolerated on our highways and it should not be tolerated on our waterways either.

This bill before us today, if passed, would require the suspension of a driver's licence of individuals convicted of the impaired operation of a watercraft vessel. It would give our enforcement officers the ability to suspend a boater's automobile licence for a 12-hour period upon a charge being laid. We know that several other Canadian provinces have enacted this legislation, as well as many American states.

This legislation is being introduced to save lives and is supported by our own Ontario Provincial Police. These front-line people see what is happening and must deal with the families of victims of someone's carelessness.

Ministry of Transportation statistics show that on average 60 people die every year in boating accidents in Ontario. More than 40% of recreational boating fatalities in Canada are alcohol-related. Statistics show that most boaters consume alcohol always or sometimes when boating. Despite the fact that the Criminal Code of Canada states, "It is an offence for persons to operate a vessel when their ability to do so is impaired by alcohol," some 66% of boaters do consume alcohol while boating.

Our OPP officers must deal with the reality of these sad statistics on the frightening scene. This is not the level at which you and I deal with boating accidents. We deal with them from the protected distance of our television set, radio news or our daily newspaper, and from this distance we don't begin to understand the whole story, the story of a family devastated by the loss of a loved one.

Many organizations work each summer to heighten awareness of boating safety and responsible alcohol use. Accidents can be prevented through safety training and better knowledge of the rules of the waterway.

I believe the penalty should fit the crime. It is a crime to drink and drive a boat or a personal watercraft and the penalty should be severe. If someone is charged with being impaired while driving their boat or personal watercraft, that same person is also impaired and unfit and unable to drive their automobile. I believe taking away

their driver's licence is a good deterrent and it will protect others on our waterways and highways.

Why is it that people who don't dream of driving their cars after drinking often don't show the same good sense when it comes to boating and alcohol? We know it is every bit as hazardous and illegal to mix alcohol and boating as it is to drink and drive a car on our busy highways.

We know alcohol affects an individual's balance, which is worsened by the fact that a boat is a moving platform. We know alcohol affects an individual's judgement, which can create a risky situation if you're driving a fast vehicle through treacherous waterways. We also know alcohol affects an individual's reaction time, which can be crucial when operating a watercraft in a populated boating area.

We know it makes good sense to support this bill. I encourage all of us in the Legislature to save lives and support this bill of the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay, Mr Bill Grimmer.

1130

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): I'm delighted to speak on this bill today. I'm delighted because it would add security to the boaters, the fishermen and the people on the beaches in Ontario especially.

There have been many serious accidents on the Ottawa River in the last 10 years, accidents that have left seriously injured people. Some will be crippled for the rest of their lives. The Ottawa River, according to Mayor Lacroix of Gatineau, has over 10,000 registered boats from Parliament Hill to the Carillon Dam. This area was cleaned up in 1989. Ever since then we have visitors from all over the world, and especially from North America, who are using this waterway.

The Ottawa River is the most important river in Canada. It has 1,271 kilometres. It was the only means of transportation at one time, especially in the year 1610 when Étienne Brûlé used it for the first time. As I said, the Ottawa River is one reason we're supporting this bill, and we just hope it goes through before the boating season starts.

On the Ottawa River there is the Carillon Dam, built by Hydro-Québec way back in 1959. Ever since then we've been seeing a slew of tourists on the Ottawa River. But let me tell you, there have been some major incidents on the Ottawa River because of the increasing number of boaters. There was no law. We have visits of the OPP on the Ottawa River, every weekend especially, but their hands are tied at the present time. You could have your driver's licence suspended, but you were able to use a boat on the Ottawa River. This is where the law is lacking. There is no protection for the leisure people who use the Ottawa River more and more.

It's funny. Just three weeks ago, we found out that the Ottawa River was not recognized by Heritage Rivers of Canada. Why? We don't know. During Champlain's time it was the only means of transportation to carry furs from Baie James to Ottawa and Montreal.

At the present time, with the increase in the number of boaters, there is police surveillance on the Ottawa River, but again they have their hands tied. We were able to attract boats from Kingston that were coming down to Montreal, back up by the Ottawa River and right up to the nation's capital. They stop in Hawkesbury, L'Orignal, Lefaivre, Rockland, Cumberland, and then they end up in Ottawa.

I just hope the whole assembly will unanimously support this bill because it is for the protection of our people, and this bill will also increase the number of tourists on Ontario waterways.

There have been many accidents all over Ontario and on Lake Ontario, and there was nothing to prevent these suspended drivers from coming on the rivers, on the waterways of Ontario. Even though their driver's licence was suspended for having been caught drunk, they were able to go on the Ottawa River and use a Sea-Doo, use a boat. I just hope that we will include the Sea-Doo in this part because there are more and more Sea-Doos on Ontario waterways.

This is an industry that is growing. It attracts some tourists but also it chases some tourists away from the tourist areas, because on weekends, especially on Sunday, we see a bundle of Sea-Doos on the river and many times I suspect whether those people should be driving those Sea-Doos on the river.

Once again, the Ottawa River is the most important river. As I said and as Mayor Lacroix has said, there are over 10,000 boats registered on the Ottawa River. This is a stretch of only 110 kilometres. If we look at the rest of the province, you could imagine how many boats we have registered in Ontario.

Once again I will definitely support that bill and I want to congratulate the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay for coming up with this bill.

Mr Bisson: First of all, I want to congratulate the member opposite for introducing this bill. I think it's high time that we recognize that drinking and driving, no matter what the motorized vehicle might be, is not an acceptable practice in Ontario.

It is now widely accepted that anybody who is drinking and driving on Ontario's highways, when pulled over, is going to get their licence withdrawn for 12 hours if it's an infraction under a certain limit, over that they lose their licence, and at one point they lose it for life. We recognize that when it comes to motor vehicles and snow machines, but we don't recognize that when it comes to boats. To the member across the way, I want to congratulate him on bringing forward this particular bill.

I want to say, however, that the reason you had the bill I think demonstrates to what extent people sometimes are their own worst enemy. We hopefully are all responsible voters and responsible in what we try to do. Never would this member opposite have had to bring forward the bill if people hadn't decided to go out and act irresponsibly when it comes to operating motor boats on our waterways in Ontario. We have seen incidents, unfortunately too frequently, where we've seen kids who have been killed,

people who were bystanders who were killed or injured, who had nothing to do with the person who happened to be driving the boat who was intoxicated. We've seen all kinds of tragedies, to the point that there's been a public outcry for the government to move forward and try to put an end to what is a very serious problem.

This member comes forward in trying to recognize by way of legislative action that driving a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol should be illegal and subject to the same fine that applies to a person driving another vehicle under the motor vehicle act.

I want to make a plea to people out there because I am an avid snowmobiler, as are many other people from northern Ontario. I love to get out on either my Polaris or my Bombardier and take a nice ride on a Saturday or Sunday, when I get the time, with my friends. I go out on the trails, enjoy the scenery, participate in the activity with friends and family. It is really a delightful way to spend some time when you have a few hours to get out.

One thing we're starting to see — I know I am not speaking directly to your bill but I think it responds to what I'm trying to say here — unfortunately is far too many people on our Ski-Doo trails driving excessively fast, to the point that they're endangering the lives of other people on the trails, endangering their own lives. We're seeing an increasing amount of alcohol utilized on the trails. Although we are protected under the motor vehicle protection act in that if somebody gets caught, they get their licence withdrawn the same as any other motor vehicle, the fact is that it's very hard to enforce this. The Ontario trail system, when it comes to snow machines, is so large that it is very difficult to get a police presence out there to really clamp down and send a message that if you're going to get on your snow machine when you're intoxicated, you're going to get caught. Because of that, the OFSC has embarked on a program with the local police and the Ontario Provincial Police to have trail wardens to patrol the trails.

The point I want to make is this. Because of the actions of a few people who decide they want to be irresponsible, they're going to mess up the sport for people like me who like to get out, drive within the speed limit most of the time and try as much as possible to operate their snow machine in a safe manner respecting other people who are on the trail. The same thing has happened with boats.

This never would have been an issue if people had not decided that they were going to be careless. Unfortunately, what we've seen is mostly younger people — I don't want to attribute it just to younger people because I've seen people my age and older act foolishly behind boats as well. But people decide: "Nothing's going to happen to me, I'm invincible. I will never be a peril and have any kind of accident because I'm always in control. I just can go out and yip it up, drink as much as I want and get totally intoxicated, jump in my boat and go for one heck of a good ride and have a great time." Your good ride unfortunately has cost people's lives, has caused people injury, has caused people all kinds of trauma that we don't even want to talk about here today, and now this particular

Conservative member, Mr Grimmatt, has come into the House and introduced a bill to try to clamp down on it. If people out there are looking and saying, "Jeez, why is the government doing this?" it's because there have been some irresponsible people out there who have decided that they're going to go out, yip it up on a Saturday afternoon and not have regard for anyone else who is on the waterways and have created this problem to the point that a member of this House has to come forward with a bill.

1140

My warning or my suggestion to people out there watching is that if we don't want the police always watching over our shoulder to make sure that we're driving our snow machines properly or we're driving our boats properly, be responsible. Remember that when you get behind the wheel or you get behind the engine of a snow machine or a boat, or whatever other type of motorized vehicle it is, you have to take responsibility. That is a lethal weapon when you think about it. You could endanger your own life by trying to drive too recklessly, and more important, you're going to be putting in danger the lives of many other people by carrying on in an irresponsible fashion.

I have to say to people out there, if you're mad because this member is bringing forward this bill, you have no one to be mad at but yourselves. It's people themselves who have created this problem, it's people who have decided to be irresponsible, and this member is doing the responsible thing by coming before this House with a bill to try to address what is a real problem. Unfortunately, there were far too many prayer services last summer and funerals for people who have died because of the accidents on our waterways, and most of them were attributable to alcohol. So if you say to people, "Don't drink and drive," that applies to boats, bikes and snow machines as well as it applies to cars.

Je veux remercier le député M. Grimmatt pour avoir eu l'idée d'amener en avant ce projet de loi. Je pense que c'est à peu près temps qu'on essaie de revenir à une réalité, que n'importe quel véhicule avec un moteur, si c'est un char, une bicyclette — une moto — un bateau, une machine à neige, est une machine dangereuse et, comme telle, on a besoin de s'assurer qu'on a des lois qui disent qu'on ne peut pas utiliser ces machines quand on est sous l'influence de l'alcool.

Je veux dire aux francophones, comme j'ai dit tout à l'heure en anglais, qu'il y a du monde qui disent : «Écoute, je suis en beau maudit contre le député pour être venu avec ce projet de loi. Il a bien du front tout le tour de la tête,» comme on dit en français. «Imagine-toi que je ne pourrai plus prendre ma petite bière quand je m'en vais avec mon bateau sur la Rideau, sur la Mattagami.»

Excuse-moi. Ce sont des actions du monde qui ne sont pas responsables qui ont causé cette situation. Ce n'est pas une majorité, on le sait. On sait que la majorité du monde qui utilisent des bateaux sont comme nous autres, qu'ils essaient d'être responsables, mais il y a eu assez de monde qui ont causé des incidents dans les dernières années, qui ont causé la mort des personnes, qui ont

envoyé du monde à l'hôpital, qu'il est devenu un problème. Ce député, Mr Grimmatt du Parti conservateur, a eu l'idée de venir en avant avec ce projet de loi, et à cause de ça, on va essayer de boucher le problème dans la loi qu'on a qui ne traite pas les bateaux comme des véhicules sous la «motor vehicle act». I want to thank the member across the way.

I want to suggest in the last minute I have that I think we would probably have unanimous consent of the three parties in the House if we were to decide at the end of second reading today to skip the committee process and send this directly to third reading. I think we have debated this issue far too many times in the Legislature. We have now debated it with vehicles, cars, snow machines, everything else. The point is that these are motor vehicles. Clearly we don't need a bunch of committee work to figure out that this needs to be done, and I would suggest to Mr Grimmatt across the way that our party would be prepared to give unanimous consent to have this bill skip the committee process and go to third reading.

My fear is that if we allow this to go only to second reading and it gets caught in an informal committee somewhere, this bill will never see the light of day. We all know how government operates and we all know how ministries operate, and often they don't want to support a private member's bill. I would be prepared to move, after our vote, that we agree to allow this bill to go through second reading, directly to third and skip the committee process so that this bill can get passed and we can save lives in Ontario next summer. Get rid of the red tape.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I'm certainly pleased to join the debate regarding the member's bill on this whole subject matter. I would like, on behalf of the Minister of Transportation and myself, to congratulate the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay for being so persistent in bringing back this bill in terms of how it could save a lot of lives in the next few years.

I think the timing is very propitious in that we have thousands and thousands of people in Metropolitan Toronto, in the new city of Toronto, who have camps, cottages and other recreational facilities in north-central and northern Ontario, and they usually take their boats and trailers, starting this weekend, up to those locations for the summer. So I think within the context of timing, the member's bill is very, very propitious in that sense.

In this province we have had over 816 Ontario citizens die in motor vehicle accidents in the year 1996 alone, of which 203 situations involved a drinking driver. In the same year we had 45 fatal boating incidents, 19 of them involving alcohol. The Ontario Provincial Police have estimated there are approximately 150 people yearly charged with drinking and driving. Clearly we need to do more to reduce drinking on our motorways and on our boatways.

I think it's so important in the sense of this bill that even one incident of a boating death or a boating accident involving injury is one too many. In fact, if you look at it in terms of personal tragedy, there is also the enormous cost involved to our health care system when you have an

irresponsible drinking boater taking a boat, racing it through a small-boating-area waterway where there are swimmers — and we've had many of these incidents in the past — and that particular vessel has struck the swimmers involved.

Our government, as everyone may know or ought to know, has taken a strong and proud position when it comes to protecting public safety. The government has clearly demonstrated its commitment by reducing the incidence of drinking and driving on our roadways through the administrative driver's licence suspension system.

As well, we have taken several other vigorous measures, some of which will come into effect this particular autumn through the comprehensive road safety bill that was passed by this Legislature in June 1997. Furthermore, the measures this fall will include mandatory remedial treatment or education programs for all those drinking drivers who have been convicted in our courts of this particular charge; extended licence suspension periods, as well as impoundment of vehicles that have been the cause of these unfortunate tragedies and incidents.

In principle, the transportation ministry supports this proposed legislation to maximize safety on Ontario's waterways. By introducing a further deterrent linked to suspending the driving privileges of those convicted of operating a boat while impaired, these people will think twice before they attempt to use a boat while intoxicated. If and when passed by this Legislature, boaters who are convicted under the Criminal Code of Canada for operating a boat while impaired will have their driving privileges suspended under current sanctions contained in the Highway Traffic Act.

1150

I believe that the strategic linkage suspending driving privileges and impaired boating is not only logical but worth pursuing. I believe we should work together to overcome any difficulties to reinforce this government's proven commitment to reducing drinking and driving, whether it be by snowmobile, car, truck or boat.

Once again, I'd like to commend the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay for bringing forth this legislation, particularly as we start the long weekend when people are using boats of various capacities, some of them without thinking of their responsibilities and how they exercise that particular vessel on the water system of this province. Thank you once again to the member for reminding us of the importance of this aspect of public safety on Ontario's water system.

Mr Bernard Grandmaitre (Ottawa East): I too would like to congratulate the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay for his private member's bill this morning. I can recall when a similar private member's bill was introduced by Mr McLean some time ago, last year if I'm not mistaken. But the government saw fit at the time not to endorse the bill. It never received third reading or royal assent. It died on the order paper. Let's hope Mr Grimmer's bill will not have the same fate as the previous bill.

Speaker after speaker has been talking about responsibility. I support this bill for the simple reason that boat

drivers, vessel operators, have to be responsible people, just as if they were driving a car or truck on one of our highways. I support the fact that this bill says that their driver's licence should be suspended or even cancelled.

I happen to enjoy a cottage on a very small lake. I can tell you that year after year I can see the great increase of boats on our lake. The capacity is forever increasing and, sorry to say, we have more irresponsible people year after year.

I will share the remaining time with another colleague. I just want to congratulate again the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay. We will support his bill.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'm very pleased to rise and respond to this particular bill, Bill 5, previously Bill 154. I've been rather privileged to have grown up on the water. When I was young, it was Lake Ontario, where the Lennox generating station now sits. Now, with my family, we are fortunate to have a cottage on Lake Kawakamak, just below the Mazinaw. When I was 12 I built a canvas-covered kayak. I built a power boat when I was 16. I feel very privileged to have been that close to the water over the years.

Over and above the speed of kayaks and canoes versus the speed of a 150-horsepower outboard motor going 50 miles an hour or 80 kilometres an hour, there are also trolling speeds for fishing. People are swimming and they can't get out of the way very quickly. We also have paddle boats, which are slow in the water; we have pontoon boats and houseboats. All of these activities are going on on a lake.

If you compare it with the driving of cars, with cars there are some in front of you and there are some behind you, but when you're out on the lake, an open body of water, they're coming at you or going away from you from all points on the compass. It's certainly a very different kind of driving experience. Add to that some of the problems of visibility. Some of the windshields of boats certainly are not to be compared to those of cars. There is great reflection off the water. Add to that maybe a water skier out behind a boat. It's tremendously different than driving a car. It's far more complex and the rules are different.

I'm very pleased to see the support of both of the opposition parties, the official opposition and the third party, for this particular bill. We're quite anxious to get this through for the boating season of 1998. I'm certainly very pleased to see the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay bringing this bill in for the second time and also the support of the opposition for this bill.

I really have to wonder why it should be any different when you're in trouble drinking and driving a boat than it would be with a car or a skidoo. We certainly have legislation for skidoos. Wow, when you add alcohol to the mix of 150, 200 horsepower outboard motors on boats and similarly inboards and outboards, that kind of power, it is not have a healthy mix. A lot of people enjoy the water. They shouldn't have to be challenged with this kind of risk when they're out there.

There's no question there are statistics showing a decline in drinking and driving, particularly of our young people, a tremendous decline in that area. That relates to education. What's important about this bill coming forward is that it will put it in front of boaters and people in general. There'll be an education component to make people aware that it's not right to drink and drive.

Charges were mentioned by the member for Riverdale. There were 2,292 charges in 1996, increasing to 2,442 in 1997, up 6.5%. There has been a steady rise in charges over the last several years. There's no question enforcement is being carried out.

This bill will put us on the same footing for drinking and driving as it does for —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I rise today as well in support of this bill. I think the issue has been around long enough for the consideration of every aspect and pretty well every side of the issue. It covers all vehicles, but it really pertains to what one would hope would be a sense of social responsibility on the part of persons. But when that doesn't happen, perhaps this would act as a deterrent. It is at least consistent with other responsibilities and other deterrents and other charges and punishments related to the operation of motor vehicles, motorcycles and even those who travel through the woods on their skidoos.

Talking about skidoos, Sea-Doos, I don't know if you can put into this bill, by the way, whether we can have some mufflers added to Sea-Doos. Let me tell you, it destroys a lot of the flora and fauna in a lot of lakes with kids buzzing around on these things.

There was a tragedy in Lake Muskoka several years ago that affected a friend of our family, a young woman whose fiancé got killed by a boat that was speeding. The operator was under the influence of alcohol. This has happened many, many times; I'm sure some people know of personal situations. What a tragedy; young life, just before they got married, and this had a tremendous impact on us who knew this young man.

There's no question that we need to advise people. We also need to educate people. We need to continue to promote the responsibility that people have when they are driving a vehicle which is a powerful piece of machinery or a vehicle which can quickly slip on the water and bash into someone else who might be in a canoe or a sailboat or something of that nature.

I'm happy to support this. I would suggest to the members that if they want to see the example of total responsibility related to boating — the boating season opens up this weekend — the Canadian Tulip Festival has a flotilla of boats, all kinds of boats. They will not, of course, be speeding at all; they will be slowly going down the canal to the hundreds of thousands of people who will be visiting the Ottawa-Carleton region this weekend. As past president of the tulip festival and not being able to see it because I've been here all this particular week, a lot of it, I want to congratulate all my friends.

I'd like to congratulate the member for this bill and will be happy to support it when it comes forward.

The Speaker: To sum up, the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay.

1200

Mr Grimmett: I certainly have been very encouraged. I want to thank all the members who have spoken today on this bill. In particular, I'd like to thank the members opposite for their encouragement and their suggestion that if we can proceed with this bill directly to third reading, it may give us the opportunity to allow the police to utilize this extra tool during the boating season in 1998. Upon concluding my remarks, if the bill does attain second reading, I will also be asking that it be moved ahead directly for third reading.

I wanted to comment on the suggestion of the member for Riverdale that this bill applies to motorized vessels. In fact, it applies to all vessels, whether they're motorized or not. It might be of interest to the member for Riverdale that 30% of those people who die annually in vessels actually are in canoes. We have a problem with people drinking and operating canoes. There's some rather graphic information from the police that I won't pass on today as to the usual reason this happens to males in canoes.

I wanted to sum up by saying that the main impact this bill will have is that it will help to change attitudes among boaters so that they will more seriously consider the risks, not only to themselves and their fellow passengers, but also to other people on the waterway, if they choose to consume alcohol and operate their vessel. This will be an opportunity for this House to send out a message to the public that drinking and boating is not acceptable.

IRISH HERITAGE DAY ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR

LE JOUR DU PATRIMOINE IRLANDAIS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Mr O'Toole has moved second reading of Bill 8, An Act proclaiming Irish Heritage Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): Point of order, Mr Speaker: I would seek unanimous consent to move the bill through for third reading.

The Speaker: Rather than move it, we'll order it. You're seeking unanimous consent to order it for third reading. Agreed? Agreed.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (LICENCE SUSPENSIONS), 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (SUSPENSIONS DE PERMIS)

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Mr Grimmett has moved second reading of Bill 5, An Act to amend the

Highway Traffic Act with respect to the suspension of drivers' licences. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Bill Grimmer (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): Point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent that the bill be ordered for third reading.

The Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

It now being just past 12 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1203 to 1331.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BERYL POTTER

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I rise today to honour Beryl Potter, a great woman who selflessly served her community and the citizens of Ontario in a long life of public service. With her passing early this month at the age of 71, Ontario has lost a woman who truly demonstrated the spirit of sharing.

Mrs Potter was a tireless advocate for the disabled, herself a triple amputee. She spent the last three decades working on campaigns to advance the interests of disabled people in Ontario.

Working at both the grass roots and provincial levels, her achievements are impressive:

In 1975 she formed the Scarborough Recreation Club for Disabled Adults, helping people to cope with their disabilities.

In 1980 she founded the Ontario Action Awareness Association to lobby politicians on behalf of the handicapped.

In 1981, the International Year of the Disabled, she was an organizer of the group PUSH, Persons United for Self-Help.

Mrs Potter served on the Ontario advisory council on the physically disabled and was also co-chair of the coalition on employment equity for disabled persons.

In addition, she collected \$31 million in Dominion cash register tapes that were exchanged for \$66,000 to buy wheelchairs, canes and aids for disabled people.

In the 1990 Ontario general election, she took on another challenge and ran as the Liberal candidate in the riding of Beaches-Woodbine, finishing second.

Her honours included the Order of Ontario, the Order of Canada, an inductee into the Terry Fox Hall of Fame, an honorary doctor of laws degree from the University of Windsor, as well as dozens of other awards and accolades.

Mrs Potter was predeceased by her husband, Victor Carter. On behalf of the Legislative Assembly, I extend condolences to her children, Dianne, Victor and Dennis, her grandchildren, her brother Norman, and to all those whose lives have been touched by the remarkable accomplishments of a truly remarkable woman.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I've received a very interesting letter written by Garry Guzzo, MPP for Ottawa-Rideau, to David Turnbull, the government chief whip. This letter has been widely distributed to many people. Here it is in three parts for the benefit of the members of the public:

"Dear Minister:

"This will refer to our discussions of last week with regards to the above-captioned item. I write at this time to record my total dissatisfaction with your behaviour and with the inconsistency with which you apply the rules of conduct in these matters. You will recall that I raised this item with you by way of letter dated May 10, 1997, a copy of which is attached and as of this date, we have not discussed the issue.

"Let me be abundantly clear that I advised you in person on Tuesday last, May 3, 1998, when you raised the issue with me that Mr Baird wished to speak on my bill, notwithstanding that his position was diametrically opposed to mine, I would be willing to provide five or six minutes for him, and all he had to do was ask like a human being. This was the same position that I presented to the local minister...when he raised the issue with me the following day. On Thursday morning at 9:45, when your staff contacted my office, Mr Baird had still not had the decency to make the request and by this hour, having learning about his discreditable behaviour, I could appreciate why he wasn't capable of looking me in the eye and asking me like a man. When your staff contacted me at my office, I could not take the call myself because I was in discussion with a member of the regional council of Ottawa-Carleton."

Stay tuned for part 2.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Halton North. I don't appreciate that. I would ask that you not do that any more, please.

BUSINESS AWARDS

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): Last night, I had the pleasure of attending the Outstanding Business Achievement Awards dinner sponsored by the chamber of commerce. This event is held once a year to recognize those companies and individuals whose success has impacted positively on the economy of Hamilton-Wentworth and has contributed to making Hamilton the number one city in Ontario in which to invest and grow a business, and we're pretty proud of that.

The Small Business Award was presented to the Meat Factory which was founded in 1980 and located in Stoney Creek. The Meat Factory is Canada's largest processor of peameal bacon.

The large business award was presented to Amcan Castings, founded in 1942 and located in the city of Hamilton. Amcan designs and manufactures high-pressure

aluminum die casting for the North American automotive industry.

Birmingham Construction Ltd, founded in 1897, won the award in the Ironman category for their 100 years' — and more — contribution as a leader in the field of foundation and marine construction.

The Young Entrepreneur Award was presented to Mirella Marsilio of Mirella's ladies boutique who founded her operation in 1992.

Special recognition was also given to ONTV for their highly deserved recognition and their contribution to the community of Hamilton-Wentworth.

On behalf of the constituents in Hamilton West, and I believe in all of the city, I want to thank all of the winners and all of the nominees.

INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): For some weeks now myself and my colleague from Lawrence have been raising the issue of the Hague convention, a document which needs to be signed to allow Romanian babies to come into Ontario and be properly adopted.

We have identified 35 families in this province who are waiting, and have been waiting, because Ontario is one of the only jurisdictions in Canada to not ratify this particular convention. Until such time as that's done we have to work under an obscure memorandum of understanding.

We had the families to Queen's Park some five weeks ago. The minister did a press release that day saying, "We're going to bring in legislation as soon as the House comes back and we're going to pass that legislation so we can deal with this troubling problem." Like so much else, the fire and brimstone and rhetoric are not followed up by substance. To date there's been no law, no bill.

Later today my colleague will be introducing a private member's bill on this issue. We challenge the government to adopt it so that people like Ann Lecours can have her baby over here as soon as possible. In fact, good news today, thanks to the efforts of our federal counterparts, her baby's going to be in this province probably in another four to five weeks. People like Gerry Levitt have made that possible.

I wish this government would do what's right and do the honourable and decent thing and bring in legislation if you won't support Joe Cordiano's bill.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I continue where my colleague the member for Riverdale left off.

"The irate councillor was calling because of Mr Baird's submission to him the day before in Ottawa when Mr Baird advised him that my bill would mean the destruction of French-language services within the municipal structure of Ottawa-Carleton. My answer to the irate councillor was quite simple. I asked him why people like M. Grandmaitre and M. Morin would be supporting this bill if that were the case. The councillor had no answer to

my question and was satisfied with my position, notwithstanding the slanderous misrepresentation received the day before.

"My question to you, Minister, is very basic: Why is it that you and your office were concerned with the speaking arrangement of my private member's bill? How many other people in this caucus have had the type of interference from the whip's office with regard to their private members' bills? And why, when the local minister, Mr Sterling, and the minister responsible, municipal affairs, are both supporting the bill, are you running around in circles attempting to interfere with my speaking arrangement for Thursday morning? How many other members of our caucus have had to put up with this type of intrusion?"

The member for Beaches-Woodbine will continue from there so we can hear the rest of it.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE FAMILY

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): Tomorrow, Friday, May 15, is International Day of the Family. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the importance of having strong, healthy families. Strong family units are the foundation of our society. As chair of the family issues caucus, I have spent a lot of time talking about issues that concern the family.

The health of the family unit is a good indicator of the health of society in general. When the family is under attack, the repercussions are felt in our workplaces, in our schools, on our streets and in all our institutions.

We have made such great progress in recent decades. The standard of living has been steadily rising. White-collar jobs have been replacing blue-collar jobs. We've developed a social safety net that is second to none.

Yet, on the other hand, our families are falling apart. Since 1990, for every 10 marriages between people aged 20 to 49, five end in divorce. That means half the children in this province come from broken homes.

Even more disturbing, since 1955, the rate of child suicide for children aged 10 to 14 has increased by 1,100%. We know we are doing something terribly wrong when innocent children are ending their own lives at such an appalling rate.

We must find ways to strengthen our families. When families are healthy, society is healthy. The family is the place where children first learn that they are valued, and they in turn learn to value others.

By building a strong economy, a fair tax system, a healthy job market and a responsible welfare system, this government has been helping families help themselves.

Recognizing that tomorrow is International Day of the Family, I hope we will all make a pledge to continue to do everything in our power to make changes that help families stay together.

1340

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My phone has been ringing off the hook. Councillors, mayors, reeves, politicians from all across northern Ontario have been phoning my office for the last day and a half asking if the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines was correct when he said two evenings ago on two different occasions during debate on Bill 12 that, yes, there will be a permanent fund for northern Ontario to replace the transition money to ease the down-loading initiatives by the Tory government.

The Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association and the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities have been asking for this fund for a year and a half. If indeed this is the case and we are going to get that permanent fund, we in opposition will be very happy because it will acknowledge our repeated requests that our northern municipalities be treated with respect and a permanent fund be set up.

Minister, I ask you to live up to the commitment made by your parliamentary assistant not once but twice when he said, "It's done; it's a done deal." I challenge the Minister of Northern Development and Mines to prove to me, to Dalton McGuinty, to the northern Liberal caucus, and to every member in this House that you will live up to the commitment made by your parliamentary assistant.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Guzzo letter, part 3.

"Now let me ask the question straight out: Is there a double standard in this caucus? Is there one set of rules for one group and another set of rules for another group? Does it matter to any of the members of our caucus who sat on a committee and sabotaged the plan for the Ottawa Market that the biggest vendor on the market today is the National Grocery chain which moves a freezer truck in at 5:30 am every Saturday morning? Who gives a damn about the local growers who have supported the market over the past 75 years? Certainly not the members of our caucus who failed to appreciate the local impact.

"Please be assured that I do not need to be advised that we are all on the same team! I know who is on my team every time I go to the Ottawa Market on a Saturday morning and will be reminded again by Ontario PCs in the Ottawa area who continually ask how someone could vote for the megacity but continue to support 12 municipalities for 700,000 people in Ottawa-Carleton. I do appreciate that your job is a difficult one at the best of times. I do appreciate that it is not made any easier when people who cannot act as adults come snivelling around asking you to break the rules and assist in sabotage. It is true that one cannot expect professional, or even maturity in all members of a caucus totalling 82, but one can certainly expect it from the chief government whip."

We knew there were double standards in this government for the people of Ontario. We knew there were double standards in this House for the government versus opposition. We didn't know it existed within the Tory caucus.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There's a lot of noise in here, but in fairness to the chief government whip, I would like to ask unanimous consent for him to respond.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Agreed? No. I heard a no.

TOURISM

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): I am pleased to announce that my riding of Lanark-Renfrew has become a partner with Ontario Tourism to celebrate Ontario Tourism Week, May 18 to 24. I have a newspaper advertisement on the importance of tourism which was placed by Marie Elmsley, tourism coordinator for Lanark county, the maple syrup capital of eastern Ontario and of Ontario as a province. As well, Marie Cheesman, tourism coordinator for Renfrew, has invited me to the annual "Blackfly Barbecue" for about 100 area tourism stakeholders next week, Tourism Week.

I would like to salute both Lanark and Renfrew counties for their diligent marketing efforts on behalf of eastern Ontario tourism. Stakeholders of tourism and small business in my riding have told me they are thrilled with the new emphasis this government has placed on this very exciting and revenue-producing industry, and I have the minister with me here this afternoon to support me on that.

Some \$120 million has been budgeted to assist with the marketing of tourism ventures over the next four years. We estimate 56,000 jobs in eastern Ontario. We know this number will increase significantly.

I encourage all members to work with the tourism industry in their communities in celebrating Ontario Tourism Week.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm rising on a point of order because the member for Lanark-Renfrew was using a prop, that being the minister, and that's just not allowed in this House.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The minister is not a prop.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PREVENTION OF UNIONIZATION ACT
(ONTARIO WORKS), 1998

LOI DE 1998 VISANT À EMPÊCHER
LA SYNDICALISATION
(PROGRAMME ONTARIO AU TRAVAIL)

Mrs Ecker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 22, An Act to Prevent Unionization with respect to Community Participation under the Ontario Works Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 22, Loi visant à empêcher la syndicalisation en ce qui concerne la participation communautaire visée par la Loi de 1997 sur le programme Ontario au travail.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1347 to 1352.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the bill, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Bassett, Isabel	Hodgson, Chris	Ross, Lillian
Beaubien, Marcel	Johnson, David	Sampson, Rob
Brown, Jim	Johnson, Ron	Saunderson, William
Carroll, Jack	Jordan, W. Leo	Sheehan, Frank
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Skarica, Toni
Danford, Harry	Marland, Margaret	Snobelen, John
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Spina, Joseph
Flaherty, Jim	McLean, Allan K.	Sterling, Norman W.
Ford, Douglas B.	Munro, Julia	Stewart, R. Gary
Fox, Gary	Mushinski, Marilyn	Tilson, David
Galt, Doug	Newman, Dan	Tumbull, David
Grimmett, Bill	O'Toole, John	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Palladini, Al	Wood, Bob
Harnick, Charles	Parker, John L.	Young, Terence H.

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Hampton, Howard	North, Peter
Boyd, Marion	Kormos, Peter	Patten, Richard
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Churley, Marilyn	Lankin, Frances	Ruprecht, Tony
Cordiano, Joseph	Lessard, Wayne	Sergio, Mario
Curling, Alvin	Marchese, Rosario	Silipo, Tony
Duncan, Dwight	McGuinty, Dalton	Wildman, Bud

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 45; the nays are 24.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION (THE HAGUE CONVENTION) ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR L'ADOPTION INTERNATIONALE (CONVENTION DE LA HAYE)

Mr Cordiano moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to implement The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Intercountry Adoption / Projet de loi 23, Loi de mise en application de la Convention de La Haye sur la protection

des enfants et la coopération en matière d'adoption internationale.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): This bill would see the Hague convention on intercountry adoption finally ratified in Ontario. The government and the minister have given their support to this bill. The legislation would finally bring the convention into force in Ontario. Without this ratification, many families have been caught in what amounts to a bureaucratic nightmare, so I urge the government to move forward and pass this legislation on behalf of all those families that have been waiting.

TECHNOLOGY FOR CLASSROOMS TAX CREDIT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT FAVORISANT L'EMPLOI DE LA TECHNOLOGIE DANS LES SALLES DE CLASSE

Mr Hastings moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 24, An Act to amend the Education Act and the Income Tax Act to provide for a tax credit for private sector investment in classroom technology / Projet de loi 24, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation et la Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu pour créer un crédit d'impôt pour les investissements du secteur privé dans la technologie employée dans les salles de classe.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Is that a tax bill?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I don't know.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This sounds, although we haven't seen the bill itself, as if —

The Speaker: I think I'll finish the vote and then I'll deal with the point of order.

Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

Mr Wildman: Mr Speaker —

The Speaker: Order. We're in the middle of —

Mr Wildman: Is it in order for him to introduce it?

The Speaker: Member for Algoma, I will deal with that directly after I finish the vote.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

A short comment from the member from Rexdale.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): The purpose of this bill is to provide for private sector investment in computer software and hardware so that it could be appropriately donated to school boards.

The Speaker: Member for Algoma, point of order.

Mr Wildman: Frankly, just on hearing the title of the bill and the explanation from the private member, it appears to me that this is an attempt by a member who is not part of the government motion to introduce a tax

measure, that this is a bill that would provide for a tax credit, which only a member of the treasury bench can introduce in the House in order for it to be in order. It sounds to me like this is simply an attempt by the government to put through a government bill using a private member. If they want to do this, it should be a member of the treasury bench.

The Speaker: Member for Algoma, I haven't read the bill and I won't until it's printed. When it's printed, I will review the bill and report back to the House.

Mr Hastings: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In point of fact, this particular bill also was introduced last December 18 and there was no objection at that time on this basis.

The Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, his is a point of order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member, I'm not going to debate with you. His is a point of order. I'll take it under advisement. Yours is not a point of order.

1400

VISITORS

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: May I be given the opportunity to introduce in the House Mrs Shirley Lewis, the clerk to both levels of the Houses of Parliament in Jamaica?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, but that's out of order.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I would also like to rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker: I have the pleasure of introducing grade 13 law students from Emery Collegiate Institute and their teacher.

The Speaker: Let's remember, members, that's not a point of order. In fact, it's out of order. I know full well, member for Yorkview, that you didn't know. I may introduce people, actually, so that's what I'm going to do now.

I would like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today a parliamentary delegation from the Republic of Bulgaria led by the Honourable Jordan Sokolov, president of the National Assembly, and also Mr Dimitar Philipov, consul general, Republic of Bulgaria. Welcome.

Now that was in order.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to take the opportunity to allow the House to have the privilege of welcoming Mr Ignat Kaneff, who is here as our guest today, and is one of the leading philanthropist citizens of our great province, for which he received an honorary doctorate of laws from the University of Toronto. He also is from Bulgaria.

The Speaker: Welcome. That's as much in order as the member for Yorkview was, as a matter of fact.

Since we're at it, is anyone else here?

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Since we are at it and you're being so lenient, I would like to introduce a grade 12 class from Chatham Collegiate Institute in the gallery.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Perhaps the remaining guests could simply stand one at a time and introduce themselves.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO WORKS

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): People on welfare across Ontario have told me that Ontario Works is working. Taxpayers have told me they want welfare to offer real assistance and links to employment. This government will not stand by and allow some labour leaders to stop these valuable and productive reforms to our welfare system.

Some union representatives have chosen to try and prevent the government from moving forward with Ontario Works, our mandatory workfare program, either by —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Members, the minister has the right to make the statement. You'll get a chance to respond. I ask you to save your comments till then. Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Some union representatives have chosen to try and prevent the government from moving forward with Ontario Works, our mandatory workfare program, either by threatening to unionize —

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Hey, Ecker, your armband's slipping.

The Speaker: Member for Welland-Thorold, that's out of order. I ask you to withdraw that comment, please.

Mr Kormos: Withdrawn.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Welland-Thorold, I caution you again, that is out of order. I ask you to withdraw that comment.

Mr Kormos: Withdrawn again.

The Speaker: Minister?

Hon Mrs Ecker: They have done this either by threatening to unionize welfare recipients who participate in community participation or by harassing community agencies.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I caution the members. I caution the members for Welland-Thorold and Hamilton Centre, please come to order. Your response time is immediately following this. I ask you to use your time then. Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: They have chosen to do this either by threatening to unionize welfare recipients who participate in community placement or by harassing the community agencies that are offering to help. Just last week the

London and District Labour Council threatened to picket 48 community organizations and to withdraw their financial donations if those agencies participated in Ontario Works to help people on welfare get back into the workforce.

Today I am introducing An Act to Prevent Unionization with respect to Community Participation under the Ontario Works Act, 1997. This bill, if passed, would provide that the Labour Relations Act, 1995, does not apply with respect to participants in a community participation activity under the Ontario Works Act. Its purpose would be to prevent those participants from unionizing or striking. Individuals participating in community placements would continue to have basic health and safety protections.

This bill indicates that we are determined to complete our fundamental reform of the welfare system, that we are determined to implement changes that will help people get back to work.

Members will recall that the Legislature passed the Ontario Works Act during the last session. By introducing Ontario Works, this government kept its commitment for fundamental reform by creating a mandatory workfare program. The program provides hope to welfare recipients and taxpayers alike by breaking the cycle of welfare dependency.

Ontario Works is aimed at creating critical links between welfare recipients and employment. The program has three key elements: community participation, employment support and employment placement. It provides access to work experience, job search, basic education, job-specific skills training and referrals to job placements. It also provides financial assistance to people in need.

Community participation is a fundamental element of Ontario Works. Community placements provide welfare recipients with the opportunity to contribute to their communities, to acquire skills, to gain work experience and to make contacts for future employment. Ontario Works is now in place across the province. Ontario Works is making welfare work. More than 273,000 people have participated in one or more of the program's mandatory activities, and over a quarter of a million people have moved off welfare since June 1995.

This bill would be another step in our plan for welfare reform. By protecting the integrity of Ontario Works, it would enable the full benefits of our welfare reform initiative to be achieved for those on welfare who want to escape the dependency cycle and for the taxpayers who pay for the system.

Ontario Works restores the welfare system to its original purpose: a transitional program of last resort that provides people on welfare with a stepping stone back into the workforce. Union opposition will not deflect us from our goal. This bill, if passed, would ensure that welfare recipients continue to have the opportunity to benefit from community participation.

We are determined to move forward with these valuable and productive reforms to our welfare system. It is a promise we made to the people of Ontario, and it is a promise we intend to keep.

1410

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I wish I could say that this bill surprises me, but the fact is it does not. The government continues unabated the war it wages against the poor of this province and also against unions.

What I would have preferred the minister to do today was to get up and acknowledge a serious crisis that's taking place, that's unfolding today as we speak in Ontario. There are 500,000 children in Ontario today who are growing up behind the eight ball. Either they're growing up in poverty, or they are the subject of abuse or the subject of neglect, or they are suffering from emotional or psychological problems.

There are 71,000 children in Toronto needing food banks today. That is a 65% increase over the year 1995. There were 600 families in 1997 — there are more today, but 1997 is the last year we have figures for — living in emergency shelters in the city of Toronto. There are 30,000 eligible families in Ontario as of 1997 on the waiting list for child care subsidies. In Ontario today, only 16% of our children needing children's mental health care are actually getting treatment.

The minister and the other members of her government are suffering from a terrible dearth of positive public policy ideas. I have some help for her, and in fact I've delivered it to her in the past. It's a program that I and my party have put together called First Steps. This makes it clear that there are certain kinds of things we can do today to address the needs of kids in Ontario who are growing up at risk. What I want to do now is to refresh the minister's memory with respect to some of the ideas I have put forward.

First of all, we believe that in Ontario, junior kindergarten should be available in every single community right across this province. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce came to this precinct some four or five weeks ago and pleaded with the Premier to fund junior kindergarten and make it available throughout the province.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister, you are not making your statement now.

Mr McGuinty: We've also suggested, Madam Minister — and it would be in your interest to pay some attention here — that every mother and newborn child should have the right to remain in the hospital for at least 48 hours after delivery of a newborn baby. Today in Ontario, as a result of cutbacks to our hospitals, mothers of newborn babies are being discharged, together with their baby, at or around the 24-hour mark. Mothers have asked that they be permitted to stay in the hospital together with their newborn babies for at least 48 hours. I think you ought to recognize that basic right.

Something else: We have also suggested to you that every newborn child and mother be visited by a public health nurse shortly after they return to their home. That is something we have done in the past. It's of positive value.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister, I think you should give them a chance to respond if you want the chance to make a statement.

Mr McGuinty: She's got all the answers when she's sitting down heckling but she has none when she's standing up.

We have also suggested, in an effort to help parents who are caught up in the struggle to juggle workplace responsibilities and responsibilities on the home front, that in the case of middle-sized and large Ontario companies, those employees be permitted to take time off work to provide —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would the members come to order, please, both sides.

Mr McGuinty: We have also, as I was saying, recommended to the minister and her government that middle-sized and large Ontario companies provide some basic assistance to their employees who are caught up in this struggle to juggle workplace responsibilities and responsibilities on the home front. Those employees ought to be entitled to take unpaid time off work to stay at home to look after a sick child or a sick parent or some other member of the family. We believe that you shouldn't have to choose between the job you need and the family you love.

The Speaker: Responses.

Mr Kormos: I'm pleased that we understand where the Liberal Party leader is on this issue. He clearly doesn't support mandatory opportunity, which was the Liberal version of workfare when they campaigned in 1995. He clearly doesn't support mandatory opportunity for children under five.

Let me say this to you, Speaker. This is the foulest, most repugnant bit of legislation to enter this chamber —

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Let's talk about the social contract.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): What about the social contract, Peter?

The Speaker: Member for Sudbury, member for Hamilton East, come to order. The member for Welland-Thorold has the floor and it's time for the response of the third party. I ask the House to come to order. Member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Kormos: — foulest, most repugnant, vilest piece of legislation to have come across this House in the last two and a half years plus.

This government is making quite clear what its intentions are with respect to workfare, and that is that it has every intention of expanding workfare very clearly and very soon and very quickly into the private sector because it hasn't worked and hasn't been working in the public sector. Once that happens, the jobs — oh yes, they're the low-wage jobs and the part-time jobs. They're the ones that the few students who are able to work, who have the opportunity, are working at to try to pay ever-increasing tuition fees. It means that those jobs are going to be displaced by Ms Ecker's workfare participants.

She's gone one further. We've heard in this House, coming from this government, two issues — once as a bill,

once as a resolution — both of them attacking the Rand formula, a direct attack on the right of workers to organize and collectively bargain in this province, a right that was won over the course of decades and generations with great sacrifice.

I know that when I speak, the people in Welland-Thorold and the folks back in Crowland remember the era that Ms Ecker wants to restore. They remember back in the 1930s — yes, in Crowland, when relief workers were stood guard by Mitch Hepburn's OPP, armed with rifles, and forced to dig sewers — when those workers attempted to organize. Those workers prevailed because they weren't afraid of the jackboots of Mitch Hepburn, and I tell you, their children and grandchildren are not afraid of the bully tactics of Harris and his corporate buddy gang here.

We know full well what this bill is all about. This bill is all about telling working people, those most desperate people who have been unemployed for so long because this government has failed miserably in its commitment to create 700,000-plus jobs — oh yes, we know there are new jobs out there, inevitably minimum-wage, part-time and temporary. Those jobs aren't jobs that people support families on. Those jobs are part of this government's low-wage agenda.

I tell you, this government is launching an all-out attack on the rights of working people to collectively bargain. I think they've taken on a little more than they bargained for. They wanted to draw a line in the sand. Well, Ms Ecker, today you have.

Let me tell you this. People in this province and in this country struggled for the right of freedom of association. I ask you if you questioned the Attorney General about how much of a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms this bill will constitute in that it precludes, forbids, people working together to associate into a collective bargaining unit.

It's a repugnant exercise on the part of a government that once again is showing its true colours, creating a low-wage economy in this province, crushing the trade union movement and making workers victims of the whim and whimsy of their bosses.

1420

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Further to the comments of my colleague from Welland-Thorold, this bill is entitled "An Act to Prevent Unionization," and then goes on to say what this is about. I would say to anybody watching this in the province of Ontario, get ready, because when you follow the Tory agenda, the day is going to come when it says, "An act to prevent unionization of your job." You're going to be next. This government has plucked off parts of our society one after another after another. People are beginning to realize, "If it wasn't me yesterday and it's not me today, by God, with Mike Harris and the Tories it's bound to be me tomorrow." That's the agenda of this government.

We've already seen the impact of you making scabs legal again in Ontario. That's okay with you. We've seen you deny injured workers decent compensation when

they're injured on the job through no fault of their own. You've gone after poor children, nurses, teachers, public sector workers one after another. And let's not be kidded by the Liberals, who talk about mandatory opportunities — doublespeak for the same thing. Either a government believes in the rights of workers, and part of those rights are to organize, or not. Clearly, this government is anti-union, anti-worker, anti-anybody who's not a Tory.

A cell phone rang.

The Speaker: There are no cell phones allowed in the chamber.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TUITION FEES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is for the Minister of Education. Yesterday I visited a high school in Sault Ste Marie. You may be familiar with the terrible unemployment problem they're facing in the Sault. They have an unemployment level there approaching 20%. I had the opportunity to speak with some students at a high school, and one of the things they've become very concerned about, obviously, is what you're doing to tuition fees in Ontario.

They understand, perhaps more than students in any other community in this province, about the value of post-secondary education. They know that if they're going to get a job, it's absolutely essential that they go on to college or university. They asked me a very simple question, and I'm going to put it to you, Minister, to give you an opportunity to respond: Why is their government making it so hard for them to go on to university?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): Far from it. There are more full-time students at universities and colleges today than ever in the history of the province. Certainly, there are more students at our post-secondary institutions than there were in 1985 to 1990, when the Liberals were in power, or indeed at any other time.

The member opposite doesn't agree with our total program to open up more opportunities to ensure accessibility, to enhance the quality of our post-secondary institutions. The Leader of the Opposition prefers the status quo. But not everybody agrees. The Council of Ontario Universities has written a letter to the Toronto Star today which indicates with regard to our post-secondary policy:

"This is a good policy. It will increase opportunities for young people to get the high-quality educations they so urgently require."

That's what this government is about, more opportunities for our young people.

Mr McGuinty: You can speak on behalf of the two dozen or so Ontario universities. I want to speak on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of students, both in our universities and in our high schools, with dreams of going on to university. I want you to keep in mind that we've got an

OAC class here behind you and a grade 12 class behind me. I want you to tell them why it was okay for us, all those sitting in this Legislature today who benefited from affordable post-secondary education, who understood how important that was to us and our opportunities in life, how we benefited from that, how we found success in life, how we enjoy greater incomes, how we enjoy a better quality of life, why that was okay for us. It was deemed by our parents to be important for us to have.

Why is it that your government is suddenly sending them the message that you're going to increase tuition fees by 60%; that if they want to go on to medical school, they'll have to pay up to \$10,000 or \$11,000 in tuition alone every year? Why is it that you've changed your mind when it comes to our responsibilities to our young?

Hon David Johnson: If we're talking about whom we're speaking on behalf of, maybe the Leader of the Opposition would bring us up to date on the federal thinking on this matter, the federal Liberal government which has reduced assistance to the people of Ontario, to the students of Ontario, to those who need health care in Ontario by over \$2 billion. What's the thinking there? Who are the Liberals speaking on behalf of when they're reducing assistance to students and health care recipients by over \$2 billion? Whom are the Liberals speaking on behalf of when they refuse to be involved in an income-contingent program to assist our post-secondary students?

When his party was in power, the maximum direct assistance to students in Ontario was about \$200 million a year. Today, under a Progressive Conservative government, the direct assistance to post-secondary students is two and a half times that amount at over \$500 million to help our post-secondary-institution students.

Mr McGuinty: If there is such a terrible shortage of money in Ontario and we can't possibly provide the necessary money to our universities and we've got to have our students come up with that money, why is it that we can afford a \$5.5-billion tax cut? It's simply a question of priorities.

Ontario is suffering from academic anorexia. You are starving our universities. Every other jurisdiction in North America has put more money into their universities. You have cut funding to our universities by 15%. Suddenly it's okay to saddle our students with tremendous debt loads so they come out of university now with, on average, a \$25,000 debt. With your new system of deregulated fees, if they do three years undergrad and three years medical school, they're looking easily at a cost of \$75,000 to \$80,000 in tuition fees.

Why is it that all of a sudden in Ontario we have decided that the future of our children is not such a high priority? We have decided that when it comes to their dreams, their hopes, their aspirations, and the dreams, hopes and aspirations of middle-class parents right across Ontario, that is no longer a priority.

Hon David Johnson: The Leader of the Opposition has asked, "What is this a question of?" Well, this is a question of quality.

Your government, when it was in power, allowed tuitions to go up by 35% and there were no strings attached. We have indicated that if a post-secondary institute is to raise tuition, then there must be a quality improvement plan attached to the tuition increase. We must see an improvement in the quality of education for our students.

Second, it is a question of accessibility and the billions of dollars of student assistance that this government has committed to: \$9 billion in the Canada-Ontario millennium scholarship; \$600 million of direct infusion over the next three years in provincial support. It's a matter of ensuring accessibility.

Finally, it's a matter of opportunity. Through our programs, 17,000 more young people will have an opportunity for the programs they want.

1430

TEXTBOOKS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My second question is also for the Minister of Education. I have a copy of a letter to you dated May 11, 1998, from Jack Stoddart, president of the Association of Canadian Publishers. You have opened up the bidding on the production of textbooks to be used in Ontario schools. Something that Mr Stoddart says that is of great concern to him, and it's of great concern to me as well, is the following. He says that under the old rules, apparently learning materials to be used by Ontario students had to be both Canadian-authored and Canadian-manufactured, but under the bidding process you've opened up, it's an either/or situation now; that the books could very well be both produced in the United States and authored in the United States. I'm just wondering if this is true. Are we going to have American-authored and American-produced textbooks used in Ontario by Ontario students?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): Here we go again. The opposition party several months ago raised the issue of the teams that would be doing the reforms of the secondary school curriculum and said we were opening it up for Americans, that we were going to allow many people from New Zealand or England or some other awful country, according to the Leader of the Opposition, to be party to the writing of the secondary school reform.

We have confidence in the people of Ontario, we have confidence in the publishers and we have confidence in the teachers of Ontario. We opened up the process, and each and every bit for the secondary school reform was won by a team right here from Ontario.

Interjection.

Hon David Johnson: Yes, I know, it makes a great headline.

We want the best for our students. We want the best opportunities for our students and we have the greatest confidence that the publishers and the teachers in the province of Ontario will deliver.

Mr McGuinty: I take it from that that what the minister is saying on behalf of the Mike Harris government is

that it is acceptable in Ontario today for American-produced and -authored textbooks to be used inside Ontario primary school classrooms. That's what you're saying. Our kids, apparently, aren't getting enough of a steady diet of American TV. Now what we're going to do, apparently, is we're going to allow American-produced and American-authored textbooks to be used inside our classrooms.

Our kids know a lot more about Abraham Lincoln than they do about Sir John A. Macdonald. They know more about Bill Clinton than they do about Bill Davis. I think, and I want to put this on record, that it is important for our textbooks to be authored in Canada by Canadians, for use inside Canadian classrooms. If the minister disagrees, then I want to hear him.

Hon David Johnson: This is quite a slam at the teachers of the province who are writing the secondary school curriculum. The leader is saying that somehow, according to him, our teachers don't have the smarts to write Canadian history and Ontario history into the curriculum of the province of Ontario but, instead, that they are choosing to write about Abe Lincoln and American history.

I can tell you, I have a lot more confidence than that in the teachers of Ontario who are writing the curriculum for the province of Ontario. I'm confident that we'll get the best product for our students here in the province so that they can have the best-quality education.

Mr McGuinty: I'm not sure what the minister is answering, but he is surely not answering my questions. I'm going to give him another opportunity.

You are about to permit American-published, American-produced and American-authored textbooks to be used inside our primary schools in Ontario. That's the issue here, and I want you to join this debate. I want you to stand up and tell me that is a good and healthy and positive development in the history of the delivery of public education in Ontario. That's what I want you to do right now. You stand up and tell me that this is a good thing for Ontario children, that they're not getting enough American TV, are not subject to enough of an American influence, but now we're going to have our textbooks crafted, carefully produced, authored and published in the United States of America for use in our classrooms.

I think that is an unhealthy development, and I want to know what you think about it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Members for Etobicoke-Humber and Nepean and the Chairman of Management Board, come to order, please.

Hon David Johnson: This is a public call and is open to any publisher who has print-based learning materials that meet the criteria stated in the call document. Learning materials submitted are to be written by a Canadian citizen or citizens, or permanent residents of Canada, and produced or manufactured in Canada. I think that probably answers the question.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Cambridge, that's out of order. I ask you to withdraw it.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I withdraw.

Hon David Johnson: The question has come up in the Toronto Star, what are the Liberals offering voters on education? It's not at all clear, is the conclusion drawn in the Toronto Star. However, two of the major unions had tables in the lobby of the convention hotel to disseminate literature during the Liberals' recent convention, and they dominated discussion. Perhaps that's what we can expect, that's where we should look in terms of the future of education from the Liberal Party of Ontario.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member forget to mention that Steve Gilchrist was at the convention also.

The Speaker: Order.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): In the absence of the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Health, I will address this question to, I gather, the minister of everything today, the Minister of Education.

Minister, yesterday we heard the Premier try to tell us that everything in the health care system was wonderful and that there are no problems. I want to tell you about the ordeal of Angela Ferns from Pembroke, who was admitted to Pembroke General Hospital. She was very ill. She was suffering from liver failure, so despite the fact that they had no beds, they admitted her, but because there were no beds they put her on a stretcher in a storage room. Half-way through the night the nurse came by and took her out of the storage room and put her in the hallway because the storage room was becoming too hot.

Minister, do you believe it's appropriate in the health care system of Ontario that critically ill patients are put on stretchers in storage rooms overnight?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): This is a situation that I'm obviously unfamiliar with. As a government, we feel that all the people of Ontario should get first-rate, excellent-quality health care in Ontario, and if any circumstance such as the leader of the third party has described has indeed happened, that people are in unsuitable circumstances at a temperature that is inappropriate, then obviously I cannot condone that. I'm sure that the Minister of Health would be anxious to hear about this matter. I assure the leader of the third party that I will pass along this concern to her.

Mr Hampton: Unfortunately, the story doesn't end there. The next morning it became clear that Mrs Ferns was very ill: 80% of her liver function was gone and she had to be moved to a larger centre which would have the specialized resources and facilities to treat her. They tried to move her to Ottawa, but the Ottawa hospital said, "Sorry, we don't have the capacity right now to be able to deal with this patient." After 24 hours of searching, for a very ill patient, she had to be flown to the London Health Sciences Centre.

The irony is that at the London Health Sciences Centre they didn't have enough beds either. In the space of one month while she was there, she was forced out of hospital

three times and had to be re-admitted three times, all because of the shortage of beds.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Hampton: She was so ill that they wouldn't allow her to return home. They put her in a hostel home where she could be monitored.

Minister, do you think it's appropriate in Ontario's health care system —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister?

Hon David Johnson: Mr Speaker, I refer this to the Chair of Management Board. I understand he has some material pertaining to it.

1440

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): On the specifics of this issue, I think everyone has a great deal of empathy and compassion for the family in the predicament. To answer your question specifically, no, that's not acceptable, and I think you know that.

This government's been trying to take every step within its means to make sure we address that. Just a couple of weeks ago and again in the budget, you know full well that this government committed an additional \$75 million to respond to the hospital emergency task force to ensure that hospitals have the flexibility to meet these needs.

On the specifics, I think you got an answer from the Minister of Education that we'll ask the Minister of Health to look into the particulars on this case.

Mr Hampton: These are the same words we hear all the time. The fact is, this is a government that has taken \$800 million out of hospital funding and has created a very serious situation in our hospitals.

Fortunately, this story gets better. Mrs Ferns got better. She did not need to have a liver transplant. To put it in her own words, she says, "I received excellent care from overworked and under-resourced doctors and support staff in both facilities, but they are forced to work in impossible conditions, placing critically ill people in storerooms, fighting to get emergency transportation, hopscotching sick patients in and out of hospitals, from room to room, to deal with the bed shortage."

The problem is this, Minister. Your government can find the money to finance a \$5.5-billion tax scheme which is going to benefit only the wealthiest people in this province. Why can't you find the \$300 million the hospitals of Ontario need and that they've told you about in order to maintain quality patient care?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I appreciate the question from across the way because it allows us to remind the third party that under their policies of 65 tax increases between the Liberals and the NDP over 10 years, our revenues went down, our capacity to provide the programs that are needed for our public went down.

This government, because of the tax cuts, has created the economy's economic growth. We've been able to make reinvestments and announcements on long-term-care beds. We've also taken the tough choices of restructuring

our health care system. This is a huge system. The public of Ontario realizes it's complicated and realizes that the problem needed to be addressed years ago, but other governments lack the courage to do it. Our government is doing that. It takes time to restructure and it means that at the end of the day, after this restructuring, we will have more capacity in the system to help more people in the province, whether it's in long-term-care beds or in emergency rooms, to try to avoid these situations that are developing.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My next question is to the Minister of Education and Training. It is along the same lines as the last, only it deals with education. Minister, when you released the so-called new funding formula, the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board was told that its budget would only be cut by \$2 million a year, but now the board has done its own analysis of the figures provided by you, and the result is that the budget has been cut by \$9 million a year. You told the Toronto District Board of Education that their budget would be cut by \$19 million a year. They've analysed the numbers and it now turns out to be a cut of \$92 million a year.

Even the boards that you said were supposed to get an increase are discovering that the increase isn't there. For example, the Durham Catholic District School Board was told they would get a \$13-million-a-year increase in budget. They've discovered, after analysing the figures, that it's only \$4 million a year, clearly not adequate for their population.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Hampton: How many school boards have had their funding reduced or changed since your announcement at the end of March and how many have had further reductions —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): The total amount of money going into the system has actually increased over 1997. The amount of money for the 1998-99 school year will be more than the money spent in 1997 for all the boards across Ontario. In round terms, about \$13.4 billion will be spent in 1998-99 and it was roughly \$13.3 billion and change in 1997. That doesn't include the teachers' pension fund, of course, which is on top of that again.

Each and every board, all 72 boards across the province of Ontario, have more moneys in the classroom. That's more moneys for teachers, for textbooks, teachers' assistants, computers in the classroom, guidance, libraries, moneys to assist in the classroom. Every board in Ontario has more money. That's exactly what we said we would do in the Common Sense Revolution: focus on the classroom, cut the administration, cut the waste. That's exactly what the formula does.

Mr Hampton: The problem is, some of these boards believed you. They believed the numbers that you gave them. Then they started doing their own analysis of the numbers. The Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board found that they're \$7 million short of what you told them they would get. They need to know within 18 days how many teachers they have to lay off for September. They have to figure out how many secretaries and educational assistants will be getting permanent layoff notices at the end of the school year instead of the normal two-month layoffs.

The Keewatin-Patricia board has had to lay off 200 staff. They're waiting to know what the final numbers are going to be. Peel has laid off, as you know, 400 teachers. The Geraldton composite high school has laid off one third of the teachers in the school because they discovered they can't rely on your numbers. School boards across the province are finding that they're having to make very difficult decisions, even more difficult because your numbers weren't true. When are those boards going to get the real numbers from you?

Hon David Johnson: The boards know the numbers now. The technical, final calculations will be completed over the next month or so, but they know almost precisely the amount of money they're going to get now. Each and every board knows that they will have more money in the classrooms in the province of Ontario.

I was talking to a board from the Ottawa area which is now in the process of recruiting 200 more teachers. Just about all of the notices that have gone out are quite different from actual layoffs. It's not untraditional. Every year boards do this. They send out a whole raft of notices —

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): A big scare.

Hon David Johnson: — a big scare, as the minister says, but then in the final analysis they withdraw those notices. Particularly in combination with the early retirement factor, there will be more teachers in the classrooms of Ontario over the next year. There will be 3,000 more teachers in the classrooms of Ontario over the next three years.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): The minister, in the past, has justified the cuts in urban areas like Toronto and Ottawa on the basis that rural boards would get more. We now know that the Hastings and Prince Edward District board has \$9 million less. Now he's saying that all the boards will have more money in the classroom.

Does the minister know that on Monday night the Hastings and Prince Edward District board decided to establish a charitable foundation in order to make up for the cuts to the classrooms that your funding formula has produced? The children of Hastings and Prince Edward District will be returning to school in September with cuts to supply teachers, teachers' assistants and computers, all part of the classroom funding according to your formula. Now they're looking to philanthropists to make up the difference.

In London, we had the first public high school in Ontario establish itself with charitable status because of your cuts under your funding formula. Now this board is looking for charitable dollars for essential classroom tools such as computers. How do you justify, under your funding formula, Ontario schools and school boards having to turn to charity to meet the educational needs of the schools?

Hon David Johnson: The member has referred to a justification of cuts. I'm not concerned about the cuts, because the cuts are on administration; the cuts are on the bureaucracy; the cuts are on the waste. The cuts are on the fact that in Metropolitan Toronto there were seven administrative buildings. Now we have one board; we need one administrative building. The cuts are on the waste and the duplication.

But on the other side of the ledger there is extra money going into the system: more money for computers, more money for teachers, more money for students, more money for the classroom, each and every board. There's \$100 million in the budget for textbooks and resources going into our classrooms, \$12 million for scientific equipment going into our classrooms. There will be more money spent than ever in the history of Ontario in education over the next year, but it will be spent where it needs to be spent: right in the classrooms of the province of Ontario for our students and our teachers.

1450

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): In the absence of the Premier, to whom I'd like to direct this question, I'll direct it to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet.

Minister, there's a very serious situation that has arisen in the Harris government, one which I think reflects badly upon the ethics of your government and upon an agency which reports directly to the Premier of this province. It appears that the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board, headed by David Lindsay, former Conservative candidate, former principal secretary to Mike Harris, former director of PC communications, an agency which is supposed to be completely non-partisan, has become a propaganda machine for the Conservative Party.

Arriving in almost four million Ontario mailboxes this week is a clearly partisan pamphlet which has cost the taxpayers of this province three quarters of a million dollars.

Minister, will you now admit that the Harris government has established this new agency as a re-election propaganda agency for the Conservative Party, funded by the taxpayers of this province?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I welcome the question because I think it's important that the government communicate with the public, with the taxpayers, to be held accountable for what we're doing and what's taking place in the province. I'll

challenge the member to compare our advertising budget with any other advertising budgets from past governments, if he wants to take a look at the Liberal government in the late 1980s and what they spent on advertising.

The jobs and investment secretariat is there to promote economic growth, to look for ideas on how to expand the economy even more. I know it's a foreign concept to opposition parties that our party wants to see our economy grow so there are expanded opportunities for young people to get the jobs that are required in the next century. One of the things they're doing is telling the public what they're doing and looking for ideas on how to improve economic growth.

Mr Bradley: It's really a matter of integrity when you do this. If the Conservative Party were to put out a pamphlet like this, I wouldn't object to it. That's what a party does. If you paid for it out of the funds that you have in the Conservative Party, I'd say that's quite all right. I don't even object when you have \$50 million in a fund which is going to promote Ontario in some way. I don't object to that.

What I think the people of this province justifiably object to is the use of political propaganda, the use of an agency of government, the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board, to purvey this kind of clearly partisan propaganda.

Will you now, on behalf of the government, reimburse the taxpayers of this province with Progressive Conservative funds for this pamphlet, which is clearly partisan in nature, which clearly has no purpose other than to shed a favourable light on the Conservative Party and your colleagues?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I think in general it's important that the government explain to the people of Ontario what they're doing. Specifically to his question, if the member from the opposition wants an answer to that specifically, we all know in this House that he asked the Speaker for a ruling on government advertising. He said he was going to refer it to the Integrity Commissioner. I invite him to do that with his new allegations and see what the Integrity Commissioner has to say.

SCHOOL TEACHERS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question of the Minister of Education and Training. The Minister will know that there is a shortage of occasional teachers and supply teachers in some boards across Ontario. He will also know that there are many students who have completed their studies at faculties of education, completed their exams, and are available to supply-teach, and it would help them start paying off their student loans, which have grown substantially.

Why is it that your government is prohibiting them from supply teaching if there is a space available for them this month and in June?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I'm not sure precisely what the member from the third party is referring to. I will say that in terms of the general teacher situation across the province of Ontario

over the next few years, I share the concern that there could indeed be a shortage of teachers, particularly in certain pursuits.

I remember being at one function when a young lady came up to me and said that she was caught by all the fuss at that particular time. She wanted to be a teacher in the future and she wondered whether I would advise her to be a teacher. I said, "Absolutely." I think there are great opportunities for young people getting into a teaching career. Particularly in certain subject areas — mathematics is one area, perhaps science — there will be a real shortage of teachers with these kinds of qualifications.

I'm certainly happy to talk to the member opposite about a particular concern he has, but in general the ministry is going to do everything it can to assist young people getting into the teaching profession.

Mr Wildman: We know from the minister's previous answer that school boards and schools are now having to turn to charity to hire teachers. We know the chair of the Thunder Bay board has said that even though they need more teachers, the funding formula won't enable them to hire more teachers.

My question is specifically related to students who have completed their studies at faculties of education, written their exams last month, and are available to teach now as occasional teachers and supply teachers. It's my understanding that the Ontario College of Teachers has informed them they cannot take the positions that are available to teach this month and next month when they are needed by the boards. In fact they could help the students in the high schools and elementary schools and, yes, they could pay off some of their student loan.

Why is that? Why don't you ensure that these people who want to teach, who have the initiative to get out there and do it, will be able to do so?

Hon David Johnson: I understand this is a matter that does involve the College of Teachers, which is not under the direct authority of the provincial government. It is composed of a body of 14 representatives from the teachers, 14 representatives from government, and three more, who make up a total 31-member board. They direct affairs of the College of Teachers. There is some situation there that is preventing these people from being involved. I will give my undertaking to the member that I will discuss this matter with the College of Teachers to see if there isn't something that can be done to ease that flow.

POLICE SERVICES

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): This question is addressed to the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services. It concerns an issue I have been involved with since I was a crown attorney in Hamilton.

The former NDP government in 1992 disbanded the joint forces unit in Hamilton and as a result there was no agency specifically designed to investigate organized crime, and that includes biker gangs. It was my impression then, and still is, that biker gangs have been allowed to flourish and aggressively carry on with their criminal

activities. Can the Solicitor General tell me what is being done to correct this situation?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I want to thank the member for Wentworth North for his question. As a former crown attorney, he certainly knows that in many cases biker gangs are not the free-spirited, Easy Rider romantics they would have us believe. In many cases they are criminals, internationally organized criminals involved in activities such as the illegal narcotics trade, contract killings, kidnappings, prostitution, extortion, robbery, assault, fraud and theft.

That is why we announced in the recent budget an immediate \$3.4 million in additional funding for this fiscal year and \$2.7 million in subsequent years to expand the Ontario Provincial Police anti-biker-gang squad. These funds will allow the OPP, the RCMP and 16 local police services, including the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police Service, to crack down on biker gangs engaged in organized crime in Ontario.

Mr Skarica: I want to thank the Solicitor General for his answer because it demonstrates a clear contrast between this government and the priorities of the previous governments which frustrated those of us in the law enforcement community. As the government demonstrated in its recent budget, public safety and front-line policing are high on the priority list. Can the minister tell the House what steps are being taken to fulfil the commitments made for front-line policing in the recent budget and what the reaction has been thus far?

Hon Mr Flaherty: This government has committed over \$150 million for new community safety initiatives over the next five years, which my colleague the member for Leeds-Grenville worked very hard to develop. They include a \$6-million program to hire 115 cadets for the Ontario Provincial Police to do non-operational tasks. This will free up a large number of Ontario Provincial Police front-line uniformed officers to return to the front lines of policing in Ontario; a community policing partnership program which will result in an additional 1,000 uniformed front-line police officers in Ontario to target high-crime areas.

The Niagara Regional Police Chief Grant Waddell said, "We can certainly use the help this program will give us." Durham Regional Police Chief Kevin McAlpine said: "I am very encouraged by this offer of assistance. Every new officer we can get out on patrol increases the level of service we can provide. Our goal is safe communities in Ontario."

1500

AIR QUALITY

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. You're well aware of the OMA report, which became another slamming indictment of your ministry and your action as minister of this province when it comes to the environment. In their own words, "Air quality in Ontario is a public health

crisis." We know that on peak pollution days 50% of all respiratory admissions to hospitals in Ontario are as a result of air pollution. We know that 1,400 hospital admissions a year are as a result of air pollution.

In the middle of this crisis, you have done absolutely nothing. You have cut your budget. You have delayed and reannounced and reannounced your program of vehicle emission testing, with no sign of this program beginning.

Understand this: This is a serious crisis. Ontarians are dying. Think of this for a second: Every single day of the year in this province, five Ontarians are dying as a result of poor air quality. Think of any other sector of our province, any other area of our province, where five people die per day as a result of one particular cause.

Very specifically, without the long-term picture here, what are you doing for June, July and August —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you for the question. Minister of the Environment, response.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): As you know, before I was the Minister of the Environment, I was very much involved with the whole issue of tobacco and controlling smoking in the workplace, as a forerunner of that legislation; in fact, 35 people die every day in Ontario as a result of tobacco smoking. That was something I attacked as an opposition member and was successful in dealing with.

We have done more in this government with regard to air quality than any of the previous governments before us. We have improved our air quality monitoring in Ontario. We have also taken an aggressive approach to dealing with the air quality standards we received, which had been neglected for some 20 years. Last year we lowered the volatility standards for gasoline in the province and recaptured some 18,000 tonnes of emissions which would have otherwise gone into the air during the summer.

We are proud of our record, and we are continuing to do more on this particular matter.

Mr Agostino: That is an amazing answer for an amazingly incompetent minister, who has done more to destroy — you have cut more money out of the MOE, you have cut more staff, you have cut more regulations, you have cut air monitoring stations, and the list goes on and on. That's what you've done. You have destroyed every single thing that had been built by government in Ontario when it comes to environmental protection.

I want to ask you specifically about smog for June, July and August, which you have refused to answer. There is no vehicle emission testing; we know that. The city of Toronto yesterday was the first municipality in this province to bring in an emergency smog plan, which means they now have a mechanism to at least try to minimize the impact of smog days across Ontario through certain actions.

Minister, you can take certain steps as well. You can, just for a change, just for once in your term as minister, show some leadership in this area. I want you to commit today that you as the minister will immediately bring in an emergency smog plan for Ontario and that you will man-

date or require municipalities across this province to do the same thing to take care of the smog problem. Simply, how many more people have to die before you have the guts and the leadership to act?

Hon Mr Sterling: We hear much hyperbole from the member for Hamilton East with regard to this. But let me speak to the actual results.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, I'm not warning you again. If you interrupt, I'm going to name you.

Hon Mr Sterling: The air quality index in Ontario is a measure of a number of pollutants in the air, including ozone. In 1989, the air quality index exceeded 31, which is moving from the good to moderate range, in 14,137 hours over that year. In 1996, when we are in power, it only exceeded that particular measure 11,802 hours. The result? Air quality is better now than it was in 1989. Air quality is better now, in spite of the huge growth which we have had in our economy and in spite of the fact that we have many more people in Ontario than we had before.

CASINO WINDSOR

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. Minister, it has been several weeks since your public musings about the possibility of three casinos being opened in the city of Windsor. We know that the Northern Belle riverboat casino is set to close shortly. The lease is going to expire on the temporary casino that's owned by the Art Gallery of Windsor. We don't know the date for the opening of the new casino. The people of Windsor are anxious to redevelop our waterfront.

You've said that all options are open, but you've provided absolutely no time lines. You've said that a business case could be made to have three casinos, but as far as I can tell, no one in the Windsor has seen those plans. Where are your business plans? Are they being prepared by some of the whiz kids over in the corner office? Why are you stalling? When are you going to make up your mind, take control of the management of the casino file and give our community the answers we deserve?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I'm glad the member of the third party from Windsor asked the question. He is probably fully aware that when the NDP signed the agreement with the city of Windsor to have a casino back in 1993, one of the stipulations in the agreement was that the riverboat, which is a temporary site, would have to be moved, gone, off the waterfront. The second condition they agreed to, in a legal agreement, was that the art gallery, which was turned into the interim site, would be converted back to an art gallery.

I was asked if it was possible that the interim site could remain as an interim site or become more permanent instead of becoming an art gallery; and secondly, and specifically to his question about the riverboat, if it would

be possible that it could stay where it is. I said it was possible, but there are two parties to the agreement. The city of Windsor would have to agree to that and the Ontario government would have to agree. From the interests of the Ontario government, there would have to be a business case to support that if we were to change that agreement.

Mr Lessard: We'd like to know who is working on that business case and when you're going to make it available. The Northern Belle is set to close on June 10. We want to know what's going to happen to the 900 employees who are working there. Certainly they and their families deserve some answers.

I have a copy of a letter addressed to you. It's dated April 23 and it's from Ken Lewenza. He's the president of CAW Local 444, which represents those employees. In it he states, "As a major stakeholder in any decision that may be made relative to casinos in this region..., I would suggest in the strongest terms that your government has a moral obligation, if not a legal responsibility, to consult with us before any decision is made."

Minister, don't you think that's a reasonable request? Have you taken any official steps to consult with the employees, the city of Windsor, the Art Gallery of Windsor and others who are going to be directly affected by your decisions?

Hon Mr Hodgson: This is probably the ultimate in hypocrisy, unless he's not talking to his local officials. Members from my staff and from the Management Board secretariat on gaming have met with the city officials as recently as last week. They were told by the city in no uncertain terms that they did not wish to have the boat remain where it is. They want it removed. It takes two parties to change an agreement that they both agreed to back in 1993. Surely your research department could have told you that.

1510

SPACE SCIENCES

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. My question relates to the awareness that all Canadians have regarding the importance of science and technology in today's knowledge-based economy. What I would like to know is, when you apply the new budget that was recently announced by the Minister of Finance and combine that with the involvement of some key people from this province, particularly Dr Dave Williams, a Sunnybrook physician who played a very key role as an astronaut in the recent space shuttle, and the participation of Spar Aerospace in that particular mission, what other companies have been involved in those missions and in this particular mission in the advance of space sciences in this province?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I thank my colleague from Etobicoke-Rexdale for making the comments he did with respect to the April 1988 NASA space shuttle. Ontarians can be

very proud that we were involved in sponsorship of scientific experiments on that shuttle mission. It was called the neural lab. They were studying the effects of weightlessness on the nervous system. Ontario's primary involvement was through our centres of excellence. This is a program administered by my ministry. We spend some \$32.3 million a year.

The Centre for Research in Earth and Space Technology, or CRESTech, as it was called, was involved in two experiments conducted on the neural lab mission. One experiment was the role of visual cues in spatial orientation. It studied the process by which astronauts orient themselves in microgravity. The other experiment was visual motor coordination during space flight. It involves the study of changes in movement during weightlessness that affect such things as pointing and grasping objects. The hardware for this experiment was provided by Magellan Aerospace Corp of Malton, Ontario. The expected spinoff from this will lead to new technologies for improving the way we detect neurological disorders.

Mr Hastings: Thank you very much for an informative answer, Minister. I'd like to know to what extent your ministry will play a greater in-depth role in the advancement of space sciences in this province, particularly when you look at the key employment numbers that Spar Aerospace carry out along with its functions: some 2,500 people involved in engineering, science and support staff.

Spar Aero is also involved in the telorobics technology and systems to support the national space missions of other agencies around the world. How will your ministry help to advance this particular sector of our vital space technology?

Hon Mr Wilson: Again I thank my colleague for the question. Our minister is very much involved and Ontarians are very much involved in the work being done by NASA. All the people of the world will benefit from the science on the space shuttle. We're working in cooperation with other companies and I'll just mention four briefly.

Sensor Technology from Collingwood in my riding of Simcoe West has been working with NASA for some 14 years. One of their latest projects was to test the effects of radiation on the Canadarm. They employ about 20 people.

Resonance Limited from Barrie, in Joe Tascona's riding, is an innovative electro-optics company which develops and produces unique light sources, remote sensors and detector technology for commercial, industrial and space applications.

Also, Millenium Biologix in Kingston is a firm that has developed the hardware for osteoporosis experiments in orbit.

Finally, Bubble Technology Industries in Chalk River also develops radiation detectors to be used in space. Their technology has been used on several shuttle missions. Bubble Technologies employs about 26 people.

The government works in cooperation with all of those companies.

TUITION FEES

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is to the Minister of Education. As a member from rural eastern Ontario, I can tell you that nowhere is your government's policy with respect to the deregulation of tuition fees of greater concern than in the rural communities of the Ottawa Valley and the rest of the province.

With that in mind, I want to tell you, if you don't already know, that earlier this afternoon the Ontario branch of the Society of Rural Physicians issued a press release which says in part:

"The Ontario government's decision to deregulate university tuition fees for medical programs will worsen the already severe ongoing shortage of physicians working in rural and remote areas of Ontario."

What does the Minister of Education have to say to communities like Barry's Bay and Eganville and Ear Falls, where at this very moment the Premier of Ontario will be meeting people who face the serious, chronic, ongoing problems of underserviced and inadequate medical personnel, and according to the OMA's subcommittee your tuition policy is going to aggravate and make worse an already bad situation?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I know this is an ongoing concern. It has been for years and years. I suspect back through not only our government but the previous government, your government, this has been a concern in rural Ontario. When I was the Minister of Health for a short period over a year ago, it was an issue that faced me even at that point in time. We were looking at ways and means to encourage physicians into mostly remote and rural areas, some in northern Ontario, some not in northern Ontario, to ensure that those communities had adequate support. We did take some actions through the Ministry of Health to encourage that, but still today we're here and there need to be additional measures taken.

One of our members, Helen Johns, I'm sure you are aware has introduced a private member's bill which would have the effect of eliminating the tuition fees for physicians, doctors, going into those remote areas. My response is that I'm more than delighted to have a look at that, to work with the Minister of Health to see if that doesn't make sense.

Mr Conway: In its release this afternoon, the Ontario Medical Association makes it clear that your new policy to deregulate tuition fees particularly for medical schools will be a significant added new impediment to recruiting, educating and returning young medical personnel into rural and northern communities.

I want to know, Minister, what you are going to say to the Ontario Medical Association, which has put out this release today, which release also indicates that your new tuition policy is going to be a particular hardship on women from rural and northern communities who might consider careers in the practice of medicine in that part of Ontario and Canada. It's your new tuition policy that is making a bad situation worse. What specific undertakings

are you prepared to give to the OMA and, more importantly, rural communities that you are going to back away from this madness?

Hon David Johnson: First of all, I would call on the support of the member for Renfrew North in terms of approaching the federal government with regard to the reinstitution of the \$2.2 billion that the Liberal federal government took away from Ontario in terms of health support, in terms of education support for those very people he professes to support in rural Ontario. If we had that extra support, wouldn't that be helpful in terms of finding solutions to this problem?

I would further say that we have been attempting to work with your federal cousins on an income-contingent loan repayment program to assist the students in the province and have had no cooperation from the federal government.

Finally, I would say that we are aware of this particular problem. It's been an ongoing problem for many years. I'll be working with the Minister of Health. Our member for Huron has brought forward a resolution which, if adopted, would address this problem. I look forward to working with her and with the Minister of Health to seek solutions.

1520

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is to the acting Premier. Today we get word of some actions by the parliamentary assistant to the finance minister. Apparently the member for Nepean failed to act "like a human being" and engaged in what is described as "discreditable behaviour" towards his fellow government members. This assessment comes from the member for Ottawa-Rideau, a nearby riding, who from his letter appears to be extremely well acquainted with the character and behaviour of the parliamentary assistant.

I would like to ask you, acting Premier, is this the kind of conduct that you encourage or condone among government members with high responsibility, among parliamentary assistants to your ministers? Also there have been some comments about your chief whip that you may want to comment on.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): Take it under advisement.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): The House leader says I should take it under advisement. I probably should refer the question to him, but I won't.

I don't want to go into the specifics of letters or accusations or anything else. I can say that our party respects freedom of speech. It's obvious that we allow our members wide discretion, unlike former parties where they sanctioned members and they used to ask them to leave caucus.

I come from the riding of Dennis Drainville. You might remember Dennis. He was a man who liked to speak his mind and he had some deep beliefs. Unfortunately he felt

he couldn't stay in a caucus that tried to stifle freedom of speech. Our caucus does not share that same view. We allow people to talk.

Ms Churley: I think there's a little bit of a difference here.

I just want to go on. The letter also includes some devastating criticism of the chief government whip. The member for Ottawa-Rideau cites a previous occasion when government backbenchers were allowed to sabotage a private bill to benefit local growers supplying the Ottawa Market despite overwhelming support from Ottawa city council. The member describes occasions when "people who cannot act as adults come snivelling around asking you to break the rules and assist in sabotage." He goes on to say, "It is true that one cannot expect professionalism or even maturity in all members of a caucus totalling 82, but one can certainly expect it from the chief government whip."

My question is, when are you going to get rid of these two losers and try somebody else?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I know the member opposite asks this question with full seriousness in the gravity of the situation and I will take it under advisement.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Riverdale, that's unparliamentary. I realize it's in a letter, but it doesn't allow you to quote it. I would ask that you withdraw that comment.

Ms Churley: I'm sorry?

The Speaker: Referred to at the end of your comment.

Ms Churley: You want me to withdraw what I quoted out of the letter?

The Speaker: I want you to withdraw the comment with respect to the two members.

Ms Churley: Oh, I'm sorry. I withdraw that.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I have the weekly business statement. Pursuant to standing order 55, I wish to indicate the business of the House for the week of May 25, 1998.

On Monday, May 25, in the afternoon we will have the Liberal opposition day. In the evening we will be calling Bill 16, Small Business and Charities Protection Act.

On Tuesday afternoon we will be calling Bill 15, Tax Cuts for People and for Small Business Act. In the evening we will deal with the Ontario Speaks resolution.

On Wednesday afternoon we will be dealing with Bill 16 as mentioned above, and in the evening Bill 15 again.

On Thursday morning, May 28, we will be dealing with private members' public business for ballot items 11 and 12, and in the afternoon we will again be dealing with Bill 16.

PETITIONS

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition addressed to the assembly which reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion three-year agreement with the Ontario Medical Association; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to improve patient access to chiropractic services on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes, because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

I've affixed my signature to this document.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition signed by members of Canadian Union of Public Employees in Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas approximately 300 workers are killed on the job each year and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario continues to allow a massive erosion of WCB prevention funding; and

"Whereas Ontario workers are fearful that the government of Ontario, through its recent initiatives, is threatening to dismantle workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have consistently provided a meaningful role for labour within the health and safety prevention system; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have proven to be the most cost-effective prevention organizations funded by the WCB;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cease the assault on

the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Further, we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre remain labour-driven organizations with full and equitable WCB funding and that the WCB provide adequate prevention funding to eliminate workplace illness and injury."

On behalf of my caucus colleagues, I add my name to those of these petitioners.

ABORTION

Mr Bill Grimmer (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I have a petition today signed by about 153 people, most of whom live in my riding. In accordance with the standing orders, I'll summarize the petition. They're petitioning the Legislative Assembly to cease providing taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions. I'd like to file that today.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I have two petitions signed by several of my constituents in Renfrew county. Both petitions are the same.

The petitioners request that the government of Ontario enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their conscience and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination. I'm pleased to present these petitions to the assembly on their behalf.

ADULT OCCUPATIONAL CENTRE

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services has announced the closure of the Adult Occupational Centre, Edgar, a first-rate community-based facility for developmentally disabled adults; and

"Whereas the Adult Occupational Centre, Edgar, is not an institution in the traditional sense and is a community in and of itself for those who reside there; and

"Whereas the care provided at the Adult Occupational Centre, Edgar, is of a specialized nature, requiring highly trained, skilled and dedicated staff; and

"Whereas alternative services and supports that would meet the needs of the clients of the Adult Occupational Centre, Edgar, are not in place in the community; and

"Whereas these clients have developed important friendships and relationships because many of them have

chosen to make the Adult Occupational Centre, Edgar, their home, despite having been given the opportunity to live in the community; and

"Whereas the majority of the clients of the Adult Occupational Centre, Edgar, have no desire to leave this community to be repatriated to a community they have no relationship with; and

"Whereas the Adult Occupational Centre, Edgar, is currently home to approximately 28 fire-setters and approximately 55 repeat sex offenders, which include pedophiles, rapists and exhibitionists, and the Adult Occupational Centre, Edgar, provides an environment whereby these clients are given the opportunity to live a fulfilling life in a safe and secure setting away from potential victims;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned residents of Ontario, demand that the decision to close the Adult Occupational Centre, Edgar, be revoked and that the clients of the Adult Occupational Centre, Edgar, be allowed to continue living with dignity, stability and without threat in the community they call their home."

1530

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I have a petition from a good number of people in northwest Toronto and Peel region. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards;

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs;

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences;

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral;

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas the health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary

to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I was going to mention this earlier on. In petitions, you may summarize the petition. You don't have to read word for word every petition. If you'd like to, you can summarize them and that way we can get — maybe not today but other days — more petitions on the record.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): This petition is about rent control and is signed by a large number of tenants. It's to the Ontario Legislature and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has brought forth Bill 96, legislation which will effectively kill rent control in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris campaign literature during the York South by-election stated that rent control will continue; and

"Whereas tenant groups, students and seniors have pointed out that this legislation will hurt those who can least afford it, as it will cause higher rents across most markets in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris proposals will make it easier for residents to be evicted from retirement care homes; and

"Whereas the Liberal caucus continues to believe that all tenants, and particularly the vulnerable in our society who live on fixed incomes, deserve the assurance of a maximum rent cap;

"We, the undersigned, demand that the Mike Harris government scrap its proposal to abandon and eliminate rent control and introduce legislation which will protect tenants in the province of Ontario."

I agree with this petition and have affixed my signature to it.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I'd like to summarize this, but this petition is so important, I want to make sure that we dwell on every word.

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has passed Bill C-68, An Act respecting firearms and other weapons; and

"Whereas we welcome real gun control and support those portions of Bill C-68 which provide tougher penalties for the criminal use of firearms, new offences related to firearms smuggling and trafficking and the ban on paramilitary weapons; and

"Whereas existing laws requiring the registration of handguns have done little to reduce the number of crimes committed with handguns or lower the volume of handguns smuggled into Canada; and

"Whereas the national gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will result in a massive misallocation of the limited resources available to law enforcement agencies,

with no practical effect on the traffic of illegal firearms or the use of guns by violent criminals; and

"Whereas the gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will take police officers off the streets and involve them in bureaucracy other than fighting crime and will make the task of real gun control more difficult and dangerous for police officers;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario continue to urge the government of Canada to repeal from Bill C-68 those provisions for a compulsory registration of all firearms."

It is signed by in excess of 200 people, and to that I affix my signature.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I have — today is petition day — another petition. In this case the petitioners request that the Ontario government protect our hunting heritage and continue to support all current forms of black bear hunting.

This has been signed by scores of my constituents in the Ottawa Valley.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense or sell chemicals or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas the health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary

to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

I affix my signature to that.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): This petition concerns education and is addressed to the assembly. It reads as follows:

"We believe that the heart of education in our province is the relationship between student and teacher and that this human and relational dimension should be maintained and extended in any proposed reform. As Minister of Education and Training, you should know how strongly we oppose many of the secondary school reform recommendations being proposed by your ministry and government.

"We recognize and support the need to review secondary education in Ontario. The proposal for reform as put forward by the ministry is substantially flawed in several key areas: (1) reduced instructional time, (2) reduction of instruction in English, (3) reduction of qualified teaching personnel, (4) academic work experience credit not linked to educational curriculum, and (5) devaluation of formal education.

"We, the undersigned, therefore strongly urge the Ministry of Education to delay the implementation of secondary school reform so that all interested stakeholders — parents, students, school councils, trustees and teachers — are able to participate in a more meaningful consultation process which will help ensure that a high quality of publicly funded education is being provided."

I agree with this petition and I am affixing my signature.

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Bill Grimmer (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I have another petition today. This is signed by 596 people in my riding and near to my riding. I will summarize the petition by saying that it indicates that these people feel the present funding for chiropractic care in Ontario is inadequate.

I would like to file that today.

1540

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SMALL BUSINESS AND CHARITIES PROTECTION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PETITES ENTREPRISES ET DES ORGANISMES DE BIENFAISANCE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 16, An Act to give Tax Relief to

Small Businesses, Charities and Others and to make other amendments respecting the Financing of Local Government and Schools / *Projet de loi 16, Loi visant à alléger les impôts des petites entreprises, des organismes de bienfaisance et d'autres et à apporter d'autres modifications en ce qui a trait au financement des administrations locales et des écoles.*

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm happy to resume debate from yesterday on this item. I had indicated yesterday that I would be splitting the time with my colleague from Cochrane South. In fact, he will be speaking later on, so I will be dividing the balance of my time with the member for Fort York. I just wanted to put that on the record.

I'm going to take a couple more minutes to just touch on a couple of areas that I didn't have time to go into yesterday. I was speaking yesterday about the fact that, on the one hand, we were happy with the government moving to reduce the impact of the tax changes on small businesses. The 2.5% cap will certainly be an improvement over the kind of devastation that many small businesses would have faced had the system remained as the government had said. Even though the government is not prepared to admit that they made a mistake in terms of the words that they speak, certainly their legislation is a clear admission that they had made a big mess of the whole situation and are prepared at least to go some way towards rectifying that.

Of course, as I pointed out yesterday, one of the problems that we know continues as a result of this legislation is the people who are going to be left to make up the difference for any increases. For municipalities, whether it be the city of Toronto or any other municipality that opts into this capping system, the difference will have to be made up by increases on homeowners. This again from a government that says it does not want to raise taxes. It is clearly raising and forcing municipalities to raise property taxes, and in this case it's going to force them to raise property taxes for homeowners.

As I indicated yesterday, in the city of Toronto certainly many homeowners are looking at excessive increases which, even if the municipality decides to phase in those increases over the full eight-year period, will still mean significant year-by-year increases. That, coupled with the big question that remains as to what happens when these caps come off, if municipalities adopt these caps, three years down the line, will still create and will still leave a major problem to be addressed. The only certainty, quite frankly, that is there for people is that three years from now will be after the next election. We know that's been one of the driving forces behind the government coming up with this particular answer to a major problem they have caused.

I want to touch briefly on the business occupancy tax issue, because the government is again here through the legislation, if not through the words, admitting they made a mistake in the changes they put forward before. They prided themselves on saying that they were getting rid of the business occupancy tax, but of course forgot to tell

people that they were simply adding that to the property tax bill, so somebody still had to pay.

The only change they were making was that the municipality, instead of collecting from the business operator, be that the owner of the property or someone renting the property, now would be collecting that money from the owner of the property. That left landlords particularly in the situation where, depending on the arrangement that they had in the lease, they would have to pick up that amount. Now the government has finally come back and said, "We'll correct that. We understand that's a problem," so there will be an ability for landlords to pass through the business occupancy tax.

However, I still have some concerns and I know people still have some concerns about what that means, because what we see in the legislation is that landlords will be able to pass through an amount which is based on the average of the new business occupancy tax, which is about 42% of the rest of the tax rate. Under the old business occupancy tax, small businesses were being taxed at a much lower rate than, say, the big commercial ventures like the banks. By averaging all of this in, it still is going to mean that again when you take the caps out of the system, you're going to have small businesses picking up a much higher percentage of the old business occupancy tax than will the banks.

That's something that needs to be clear, needs to be put on the record, because I heard the parliamentary assistant yesterday indicate that was not the case. While that may not be the case in some instances, it certainly is going to take place in some. That's an issue that we'll certainly want to pursue.

The last comment I want to make is with another change that I find a little peculiar. Those are the changes that this bill is making to Bill 60. Under Bill 60, you will recall that one of the changes the government made is that it took upon, the government particularly gave to the Minister of Education essentially the right to decide by regulation, the collection of some \$6 billion — in this case we're talking about half of that, the \$3 billion that applies to commercial and industrial assessment — to set that by regulation, without any debate here in the Legislature, without any public discussion, without any approval by the Legislative Assembly.

An interesting thing is happening here, because by amending this legislation, what the government is now doing is that they will simply tell the municipal government, "This is how much money we need to raise from the commercial and industrial assessment," and then they will request the municipality — not the school board but the municipality — to then set the rates that apply to that. I think it's going to be of great interest to the education community and to school boards that it's now municipalities that are being given the option, rather than school boards, of suddenly setting education tax rates.

I suspect one of the reasons that has driven the government to this is because they know they are on thin ice when it comes to justifying the setting of \$3 billion worth of taxes on the commercial side and another \$3 billion

worth of property taxes on the residential side for education funding purposes simply at the whim of a regulation. I believe they know they are on thin ground on that and they are trying now to give the pretence that the municipality, that is, an elected body, is going to have the ability to make that decision.

I think it will be interesting to see how this one plays out, because it is not really giving that body a real power but it is giving the semblance of giving them a power because they are an elected body. In this case it means that they will be able to say, "They are setting it; we aren't setting it by regulation." It's a kind of a roundabout way to resolve a problem that I think is going to still remain and that we will have an opportunity to deal with.

I want to conclude by just talking for a second about the process of this bill. When we began debating this bill, we were under the understanding, on the basis of what the government had told us through the House leader's office, that this bill would go to committee. We were now told this morning that this bill would not go to committee. I want to say to the government that they are making a major mistake. They are making a major mistake and, if nothing else, they should just simply recall the mistakes they made with the previous property tax bills, which they then have had to come back and correct with subsequent legislation. It would be in their best interests, let alone in the interests of good policymaking and good lawmaking, to let this piece of legislation go to committee.

I understand the time pressures the government is under. We all understand the time pressures that they have caused for themselves and, more importantly, that they are causing for municipalities out there because the determination of the assessment amounts is crucial in determining what's going to happen with the tax rates. We know that whole process has been delayed, so I understand the pressures the government is under. I want to just say to the government, on by own behalf and on the behalf of our caucus, that I believe there are ways in which this bill can get to committee, particularly even in the week that we are back after the break next week, and still allow the decisions to be made in time to have the bill, if the government wants to proceed with this bill, done so that municipalities will still be able to make the decisions they need to make, realizing that they are already behind the time line that they were adopting.

I want to just say to the government, don't make the mistake of trying to ram this bill through in the week after next and then have to discover, a couple of weeks after that, that you've got even more mistakes in this legislation that you will have to correct with a further piece of legislation. Take the time to have the bill go to committee. I would prefer that we spend less time at second reading debating it in the House and that we have more time at committee to deal with it. I think that can be accommodated in a way that allows us to do the kind of clause-by-clause analysis and discussion that we can only do in a committee setting, and then allow us to come back.

Our basic position is that the government is fundamentally wrong in what they're doing, that they should just

freeze the whole current value assessment scheme. Obviously they are not prepared to do that, so if they're going to proceed, we believe that some of the changes that are in this bill are useful but that there are also some mistakes and some problems that will come back to haunt the government during the course of the summer. We think there are some changes that could be made and should be made to the bill, and we think that the bill going to committee will allow us the opportunity to try to fix some of those problems and make the kinds of decisions that will at least, if not be acceptable out there, be easier to implement, be more appropriate to implement and be fairer than what the government is suggesting so far.

1550

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Before our friend from Fort York begins, we should have a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Clerk, could you check and see if there is a quorum, please.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): It is my pleasure indeed to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 16. There is a great deal to say on this bill, as indeed with so many other bills.

I remember yesterday's debate, with the comments made by the members for Nepean and Scarborough East. To hear those two members speak, you would think that this is annus mirabilis, the year where people are literally digging gold from their backyards. You would think from their speeches that we're in that kind of a year, annus mirabilis, but we have been in three consecutive annus horribilis, and we see it repeated year after year. These people don't give up.

If the members from Nepean and Scarborough East want to know the definitions of "annus horribilis" and "annus mirabilis," I'll be happy to provide them after my remarks, because I need the time to be able to make other points.

We have seen the degradation of the democratic process in this province unlike any other period of the history of many other governments that we have seen. We have seen the degradation of the democratic process with respect to the vote on the megacity, with respect to the download, with respect to the hospital closures, to the mergers of schools and so many other issues. That is why I speak of it as annus horribilis, for good reason, and people in the new city of Toronto understand what I am talking about. I suspect even the members from this new Toronto understand as well. Perhaps M. Harris doesn't, because he is from a faraway place.

The Deputy Speaker: I'd like to remind the member for Fort York to refer to the members by their riding, and in Mr Harris's case, as the Premier.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, I have been very diligent in referring to the members from Nepean and Scarborough

East, and I'll try to remember about the Premier as well. From time to time we mention him by name so the people remember him by name, because they need to associate these years, these horrible years, with the man, the Premier, who is associated with those things.

To quote Zorba the Greek, we've had "the full catastrophe" in this province, and we continue to feel it today when one of the ministers announces that she and her government are going to prohibit people on workfare from unionizing. The dictatorial nature of this government continues. It doesn't let up. They speak of the new compassion of this government, and they come up with a bill today that again is an intrusion into people's basic rights. We thought they had made this fine U-turn to a more pristine nature, a more compassionate nature, and yet we don't see it. I certainly don't see it.

We're dealing here today with Bill 16, a bill designed to correct two previous mistakes. We are not here today to deal with a bill that's called the Small Business and Charities Protection Act on the assumption that these people have created something new for small business. We are here because they have made egregious errors in the past and they've come up with this bill to correct them. That is why we're here — not on the basis of something new, but on the basis that this government says: "Oh, small business is the engine of our economy. Thus we've come up with something new. We're going to cap property taxes for those people." Why didn't these people, these fine, thoughtless Tories, think of it before?

It seems that these people again want to press ahead without hearings. You'd think they might have learned something from the error of past practice, but they're going to continue; they're going to dispense with future hearings because there's nothing for them to learn. We've had Bill 106, we've had Bill 149 and we now have Bill 16. People want to be able to comment on that bill, and I'll speak to that at the end of my remarks. I hope they will provide taxpayers an opportunity to be heard, unless they want to continue with their degradation of the democratic process, continue with their dictatorial approach to people and taxpayers. If they want to do that, I suspect they can. They are politically entitled to do those things. Perhaps people like that sort of Tory flagellation; I'm not sure. I hope not. I certainly don't enjoy it. I know that a lot of people in this city don't like it.

But we're here because of past mistakes. We talked about the problems of the two bills they introduced. We said, "Current value assessment is going to create chaos across the province, but in particular in the city of Toronto," and they didn't listen. We said: "Current value assessment is unstable; it fluctuates from year to year. What people want and need is stability to know what to expect. But the current value assessment scheme doesn't give them that stability." We said that.

But these fine people with big ears didn't hear it, these fine Tories who have been saying, "But we listen; we've got big ears." They didn't hear us when we said, "Give us some impact studies so that you can protect yourself."

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): Who's got big ears? That's a personal attack.

Mr Marchese: Monsieur — I'm not going to say his name, Madam Speaker. Member for Lambton, we said: "Protect yourself from the error of your ways. Do the impact studies. If you've got them, show them to us." You said you had them. "Show us the impact studies so that we know, so that you know and you can appear to be competent before you pass bills."

They didn't produce them, because Tories don't like to think; they like to act and think later. That's why we have Bill 16, because it is the afterthought of the egregiousness of their error of the past. They didn't do the impact studies. Then we said, "Property tax assessors: What have you done to train these people?" I remember many a time saying to these folks across the way, "What training have you done?" The training was almost laughably inadequate.

They literally picked up people from the street saying, "Do you want a job?" We needed to assess four million properties across the province. They had a year or a year and a half to do the job. In British Columbia, we were told, to do the job properly you need at least three or four years. These guys did it in a year, a year and a half, with inadequate training — and not only inadequate training for these assessors, but obviously not enough of those people to go out and do a proper job.

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That is why in the last four months that I've been around in my area and beyond, the former North York, people were telling us: "We don't understand. It isn't clear to us how they assessed my property, because a property of similar value next to me is paying \$500 less or \$1,000 less than what I'm about to pay under this reassessment scheme."

We said to them, "If you do this reassessment of properties, you will have neighbours spying on neighbour." In fact, I've had people come into my constituency office saying: "But I don't have an air-conditioner in my house. In fact, some people have air-conditioners in the back, so if an assessor might have possibly dropped by, he would not have seen it, but if I have my air-conditioner in the front, I get reassessed at a higher rate. Is that fair?" these people are saying. Or there's some other person saying: "But my neighbour has an extra room at the back. If the assessors haven't gone to the property, that means I pay the same as or more than someone who has an additional room at the back."

Mrs Boyd: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Again we have no quorum.

The Deputy Speaker: Clerk, could you check and see if there's a quorum, please.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: I am pleased that more people are here to listen to this discussion, because I want to have the benefit of their two minutes in response to what we've said.

We said to them, "Is this the kind of market value system you want, where neighbours are spying on other neighbours, saying, 'I don't have an air-conditioner, somebody else does; I have an extra room, somebody else doesn't; I didn't renovate my house, somebody else did'?" That's the kind of behaviour the market value system encourages.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): It was always like that.

Mr Marchese: It doesn't mean the system is good if you've had it in some communities and you don't have it in others. I'm saying the market value system — the current value system, under different names proposed by this government because they want to avoid the term "market value" because some of these folks were opposed to it — by the way, prior to their election some of these people said "No way" to market value assessment. But when they got elected, of course that was a different matter. A promise made, a promise kept, I guess.

But the market value system fluctuates in ways that create problems. It encourages people to spy on each other. It is not the right way to go. I'll talk about what the right way to go is towards the end of my remarks.

We mentioned that the business occupancy tax was again a big mistake. They touted it as something that was of course outdated. "From 1904? My God, we've got to get rid of this system." But did they put any thought into what the elimination of the business occupancy tax would do? They didn't. They did not put any thought whatsoever. What the elimination of the business occupancy tax did was transfer the weight of property taxes on small business. You will recall that banks, insurance companies and the big towers here in downtown Toronto, in my riding essentially, were paying a little more than the small business sector, because it made sense. If you're making millions and billions, it makes sense that you should pay more than someone who's a barber or owns a little vet store or a little grocery store. It makes sense.

I always love that smile from the member for Etobicoke-Humber, as if he's so smug in his knowledge. I don't know what knowledge he has, but when they and he eliminated the business occupancy tax, it caused tremendous shifts from the towers and the big businesses to small business. That's why small business went crazy, member for Etobicoke-Humber. Your small business buddies went berserk. That's why they rioted in the streets in protest, because they said: "Your incompetence has brought me to the streets to protect my livelihood because the elimination of the business occupancy tax, smug member for Etobicoke-Humber, is going to put me, a small business, out of business."

That's what we heard from small business across Toronto. We had people saying, "We're going to get increases of 100%, 300%, some 500%." It is no joke. I don't come up with these numbers. Small business came up with these numbers at our meetings in the former north Toronto, in Etobicoke, where this fine member comes from, in Scarborough, in Toronto — all over. The riots had immense effect on this government, because these

guys had to surrender eventually. They surrendered. They would have nothing of it in the beginning, because they said: "We gave the tools to the city. We gave them lots of tools. We've got chainsaws in that toolbox; we've got hammers in that toolbox. Man, they could use any one of those instruments if they wanted to. But the city fails to use this chainsaw and the big mallet that we gave them. What are we going to do?"

The city, through Mayor Lastman, a fine Tory friend of these people, working diligently on behalf of the city of Toronto against the evil interests of this empire across the way, did us a fine turn by fighting them to the very end, where he said: "We can't fix this Tory catastrophe. We cannot deal with the full catastrophe of this Conservative initiative. The tools they have given us do not work." Then M. Ernie Eves comes up and says, "If they can't do it, I'm going to do it myself." I thought to myself, let John Wayne do it, because if the whole of this new city of Toronto, with its insight and power and available tools, can't come up with it — John Wayne said, "I'm going to fix it." But we knew that John Wayne — and I wish he had, because my answer to that was: "You do it. You caused the catastrophe; you fix the problem. I'm not going to solve it for you."

Bless M. Lastman, he didn't give in to his Tory friends, in order to protect the interests of Torontonians. I have to tell you I was proud of him. Eventually, they dealt with the sheer incompetence of the Bill 106 that these people brought in, and 149, with something they called caps. Small business, under tremendous pressure from them, urged these fine people to come up with something new, and they did. They said, "We're going to cap property tax increases for small business." That's why we now have Bill 16, called the Small Business and Charities Protection Act. They now have come back to correct the incompetence of the past with a new bill that protects small business.

But this cap is a temporary gap measure, a temporary solving of the matter, but I tell you, it hasn't gone away. Three years from now those small business people are going to have to face a new government with a new solution. We don't know what is going to happen three years from now.

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These Tories came up with the idea of reforming property taxes, and what have you got? You've got a system that is continually broken, that continually needs mending, which is what they call "reform." "Reform" means, "We have broken the system that worked. We didn't fix it through one bill after the other and now we've got to reform it again with another bill," and these fine Tories are saying, "We're not going to listen to people because we're not going to take it to public hearings."

I don't know how to deal with the incompetence of this government. I certainly don't. Other than having the liberty here — thank God they haven't taken this away from us — to be able to speak for 20 minutes or so, we've got no other tools. They give the opposition no tools. How do you fight back except through these comments that

we're allowed to make, that people are allowed to hear, and hopefully through them are able to take sides.

Mr Spina: You were in government for five years and you didn't do a thing with it.

Mr Marchese: This guy says we were there for five years and we didn't do anything. We didn't implement MVA. Under pressure from people, we did not implement a market value system because we realized it would have been a ruinous problem for many. So we said, "We've got to think this through."

Under this scheme, homeowners are not protected by any cap. Homeowners in my riding are facing incredible tax increases as a result, not of the business occupancy tax per se but of the reassessment of their properties. Many seniors in my riding are saying: "My income is very low. I am the only person in this house and I'm facing \$600 increases." Some are saying: "I am facing \$1,000 increases. Where am I going to get the money?"

To hear these Tories, from every sector in Toronto and beyond, they say: "It doesn't matter. These people have not been paying their fair share." The fair share issue needs to be dealt with. We New Democrats argue that we need to get housing out of the property tax system, we need to be able to get child care out of the property tax system, we need to get education out of the property tax system and we need to get welfare out of the property tax system so homeowners do not have to shoulder \$6 billion worth of money that they can't afford.

Mr Spina: Where are you planning to get the money to pay for all that?

Mr Marchese: You need to shift away from property taxes because, we argue, it's profoundly inequitable, on to an income tax scheme, M. Spina, the member from Brampton. We need to get money from an income tax scheme and we need to do it progressively. You can't do it overnight.

Homeowners in North Toronto, where meetings were held in the member for Eglinton's riding, were saying, "We are about to get hit in a very serious way, and some might believe we're wealthy, but we are not." The people came to those meetings saying, "We will not be able to sustain these increases because we are not rich people." They're seniors, many of them, with low incomes. How do you deal with that?

They might argue that the city has the ability to be able to defer those costs for those people. They don't want that to be deferred. They want that load to be taken away. I tell you, the city is not going to have the means to help those people out. Why, with the downloading of housing, welfare, child care to the municipality, the city doesn't have the money to protect seniors.

Who is going to protect seniors? The new, compassionate M. Harris, these fine people here who have given us nothing but one catastrophe after the other over the years? Are they going to protect seniors? They are not. We need to shift away from property taxes by taking education progressively away, over an eight-year period, welfare out, child care out, and things of that nature. Then what is

left is an easy burden to bear. What is left would be a small amount of money.

I'm urging people watching this program today to call their Conservative members and demand hearings on this bill because there are repercussions that will affect each and every one of them. If they can't get hold of them and they need advice on how to reach their fine members, please call me: 325-9092. I will tell them how to reach these honourable ministers and these other members of this government.

We need hearings. This government wants to escape scrutiny and criticism. We cannot allow them to do that.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): There has been a considerable amount of public consultation, of debate, in this place on property tax reform over the last 12 to 18 months. You look at some of the input this government has received on this issue. We are listening. I will use a few examples. I've got some correspondence here.

From the city of Toronto: "We ask you to listen to the voices of your voters," with respect to charitable organizations. This government is listening. We want to amend the bill to protect charities.

Another letter, from Weston: "I urge you to bring in legislation in order to save charitable organizations from a harsh financial effect that would force a reduction in our services." Again, this government listened.

To show the importance of this, the cover on this letter says it all: "This is an urgent memo and requires urgent action." This government has listened and we are putting forward some proposals to act in this area.

This legislation would help to deal with gross leases. I have here a resolution from the city of Ottawa signed by the mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson, "Therefore be it resolved that council urges the province to take swift," and "swift" is underlined, "action to correct the problem of increased cost to commercial landlords with gross leases." This government takes the time to listen. We've put forward Bill 15 and, as Mayor Jim Watson says, we want to take swift action. I know the deputy mayor, Allan Higdon, supports that initiative as well.

A letter from Don Mills from another charitable organization asks that this government take action. We have listened, we have consulted and we want to ensure that small businesses are protected in terms of these much-needed transitions in our property tax system. It is extremely important that we hear those voices, that we bring them here and that we ensure these changes are made in a timely fashion so that they are protected.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I wish there was a provision in this bill, as the member does, that would control gasoline prices in this province. Today there was a big public relations press conference held where three of the Conservative backbenchers who have nothing to do this weekend are going around with cameras to take photographs of the price of gasoline.

I crashed the press conference because I wanted to reveal what the true position of the government was. I quoted my good friend Bill Saunderson, who was the

honest guy about it. He said: "Look, we're all about the free market system. We'd be the laughingstock of Canada if we were to control gas prices or do anything about it." I quoted that. I thought we could put Bill on the record because he was the honest guy about it. Bill is not going to be out this weekend taking photographs of the gas prices. He knows this government is all about the free market system. I'm surprised that we don't have an amendment in this bill about that.

Some will remember that in 1975 Premier William Davis froze gas prices. He brought a bill in the House that said gas prices were frozen for, I think, 90 days while they had an independent commission look into them. When I hear all the huffing and puffing from our Premier, Mike Harris, about this, I wonder why he doesn't do anything about gas prices.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: The member for London Centre will agree with this. Heaven knows, when it comes to bullying the small people in this world around, the disadvantaged people in this world around, the Premier is not hesitant. He will elbow them aside any time. He will use the bully bill, Bill 26, and other bills to do whatever he can to be able to bring about that change, but when it comes to gas companies he's not prepared to do so.

There is some bad news, and that is that Ab Campion is leaving today. He said, "We have heard much here today in the prepared speeches, which I think have taken a long time to write, and apparently the honourable members have had some help with them." That's Ab Campion, who helped out with these speeches, and I want to pay tribute to him after his long service to the Conservative Party.

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Mrs Boyd: Back to the business at hand, which is Bill 16 and the speech of the member for Fort York.

I understood entirely that the member for Fort York was talking about the fact that this bill should never have been necessary. If the government had thought ahead and really looked at what was going to be done, had had the competence to put together legislation that didn't lead them into the kind of controversy they face, they wouldn't have to have this bill.

We had another example this afternoon, because the member for London South fell asleep in the middle of the committee hearing, missed a vote — and he was right to miss the vote, because it was an unconscionable thing that he would have voted on. So this government has had to bring in another piece of legislation, and they can be very sure that this is going to be another piece of legislation that will cause havoc within the province and will call this government further into disrepute.

For the member for Nepean to try and say to the member for Fort York, in response to his speech, that the government has listened and that's why they've done it — if the government had listened in the first place, everybody told you that this was going to be necessary. For the member for Nepean to read out letters from frantic charities, from frantic communities, from frantic small business people thanking them for bringing forward now what

should have been there in the first place just brings forward how absurd this whole situation is.

Madam Speaker, I would say to you that I know the member for Brampton North, who is not in his chair, is quite far from you, but when those of us on this side of the House are trying to listen to the speeches, he is constantly nattering, and I would ask you to call him to order.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): It's my pleasure to comment on the member for Fort York's speech today and to talk about the fact that this government has frozen the industrial and commercial education taxes in various municipalities across Ontario, including the municipality of the city of Toronto, where I'm from.

I think it's very important that businesses know that their property taxes for education are not going to rise by more than 2.5% in 1998, 1999 or the year 2000. Likewise, to accommodate that, no one's commercial and industrial taxes for the education portion are going to be reduced by more than 2.5%. When you look at the years from 1985 to 1995, those people saw average property tax hikes of 8%. Under the Liberal and NDP governments we saw massive property tax increases led by those two governments, so to see members opposite complaining about a maximum freeze of 2.5% is quite ridiculous.

The member for St Catharines was commenting on the consumer watchdog commission that just held a press conference to deal with the high gas prices, which my constituents complain about and that happen every long weekend in this province. From the actions of the members for Quinte, Halton North, Hamilton West and myself, I truly believe that the oil companies will keep the gas prices down, not only this long weekend but beyond, because they'll know we are watching them to see what is happening to those prices across Ontario. I know in your riding, Madam Speaker, it is an issue of concern to you, as it is to all members, and it was interesting to see some members there from the coalition for higher gas prices today.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Fort York, you have two minutes.

Mr Marchese: I want to thank my friends who spoke, and the others as well, and want to say we are here because of the sheer egregious incompetence of this government. The member for London Centre said it well: Had they listened, as they claim, we wouldn't be here. The reason we are here is because they got a big beating, from their friends in particular. They got whacked from one end of the city to the other: north, south, west and east. That is why, because of this beating they got, we're here to correct past problems.

They corrected the gross leases problem. They decided, "Oops, we didn't realize that." They're here because of the inequities in the differentiated business tax rates from small business in Toronto versus the other people in the 905. They are here to deal with charities because they realize that, oops, they screwed up. And we're here because small business was going to get whacked big time — their buddies, who vote Tory. That's why we're here.

We are here, they say, because they're listening. If these fine Tory people here were listening before, we would have corrected their problems in advance and not have to deal with yet another bill. They disguise it in their attempt to beguile the public under a title that's called Small Business and Charities Protection Act and make it appear as if it's a new one.

This issue is going to come back again. The city of Toronto and other communities are going to have to deal with this. This government, hopefully, won't be here to renegotiate that problem, but another government will have to come back and solve this problem. They've only temporarily put it away because they've got an election coming. I urge people to urge this government to have hearings so they can be heard.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): It's quite interesting to listen to the remarks of the members opposite dealing with this specific act, the Small Business and Charities Protection Act. I was thinking back to the remarks of the member for Fort York, talking about incompetence and that if we had listened, "You wouldn't have to come back with another bill." That's their particular interpretation.

Let me take this House and its members back to about November 29, 1993, on a Saturday, when the NDP were in power in this province and they were still grappling with the very bill dealing with market value assessment. At that time we had a situation of a standing committee of this Legislature listening to people on the virtues of market value assessment, either the full-blown version or one that was modified, and you know what? At the same time, almost to the hour, the NDP members of that standing committee, probably resources development, who were hearing these submissions from all these delegations in the city of Toronto and the other suburban cities within the old Metro, were urging a little courage by the members of the government of that day.

But guess what? While that was going on, the Premier of the province of that time, Mr Rae, and his cabinet, specifically the minister responsible for Management Board, were making a decision to keep the thing the way it was, until we changed it — to keep the status quo. Why? Because members of the Rae cabinet of that day came to a decision in November 1993 that said in effect small business in the old city of Toronto is much more significant, much more valuable, than any equivalent small business in the rest of the old Metro. Whether you were a restaurateur, a dry cleaner or a retailer, it didn't matter — the people in those businesses in the suburban cities be damned.

While we had the charade of a standing committee of the previous government listening to the pleas of people from across the old Metropolitan Toronto area for some form of tax relief, what was happening? The cabinet of the day was making a decision that reversed any recommendations coming out of that standing committee. There's the starting point of what we can call the ultimate incompetence of the previous government dealing with this issue.

Now the member for Fort York has the so-called pretend sympathies for the plight of small business people today. The only reason any of those people were out parading last December, January and February is because there was a lot of scaremongering going on by certain members opposite who were misinforming the people of the side-effects of the changes to the Fair Municipal Finance Act.

They basically said, "Let's keep everything the way it is because it's great the way it is." It leads you to the inequities and unfairness we've had in assessment in this city for the last 50 years. That's just great. That's just fine, that the people in Etobicoke or in Scarborough or in North York can just keep paying the piper forever. That's great. That's what you call equality; that's what you call equity; that's what you call fairness. Think about it. If that were the situation, why is it we had to make the changes we did?

1630

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Is it possible that when a member says something that is really wrong, a member would be able to stand up to correct the record?

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Hastings: You're always making those judgements about us. We don't stand and make those points of useless order, member for Parkdale.

Mr Ruprecht: Be nice.

Mr Hastings: "Be nice."

That's the scenario we're dealing with in this whole situation, that the members opposite, of both parties, are members who want to retain the status quo. Everything is just fine the way it was. Don't make any changes.

I have listened carefully and I have gone through the debates. I looked for a scintilla of an alternative to what we're proposing. The only thing I heard weekly from the member for Fort York — I think he may have made his remarks on debate on other of these bills dealing with property assessment reform — was that we revert to the unit value system of measurement. If you go and look at that particular system, I think you'll find it in about two cities throughout the work, Jerusalem being one of them. It certainly is not a widespread methodology of assessing property for assessment purposes so you can come up with the moneys you need for the vital services local governments have to provide today.

Here we are with Bill 16. It is purely a product of the evolution of all the changes that we have had to make because of the legacy of the accumulation of neglect by the two previous groups. Time and time again, they had opportunities to make changes in the fundamental form of property assessment in this Metro area. What did they do? Ignored it every time.

If you go back and look at the budget of the previous Liberal regime of 1989, we had a Nixon doctrine at that time which said, "We're going to impose the commercial land concentration tax." That was a marvellous piece of taxation which this group over here constantly hailed as a

virtue. Let's look at the basic effects it had on small business, on hotels, even within the old city of Toronto.

What happened? We were at the height of the prosperity of the 1980s. In about October 1989, with this marvellous new tax coming on hotel properties, what did it do to the usage rate of those hotels, especially out on the strip and in other parts of the old Metropolitan Toronto? If you had a participation rate of about 60%, it plunged. It went right down to about 40%. But they'd consider that a success. It threw a pile of people out of work as we entered that recession. That was that marvellous land commercial concentration tax that Mr Nixon introduced in his budget in the spring of 1989. It was a real whopper in killing off jobs in this economy when it was already sputtering and there were warning marks up in terms of the Bank of Canada's interest rates.

"No, no, we'll ignore it; we'll put this tax on because we need the money." That's what they did, because they were spending at about four times the rate of growth of the economy in those years. When the growth rate was about 3.8% to 4%, our Liberal friends across the way were spending money at 16 times, but that makes good sense in terms of their economics when you look at how they ran government. It was a marvellous opportunity. They spent like there was no tomorrow.

That's why we end up having the problems we have to deal with today. They sit across the way and criticize us for trying to make some specific sensitive responses on small businesses. What did we come up with? What did the finance minister come up with after a lot of consultation, as the member for Nepean pointed out? A cap of 2.5%. Did we ever hear that from the members opposite, as a proposal, as a reasonable alternative for dealing with the situation? No, we did not.

All we heard was, "Let's keep everything the same." Taxes were going to go sky high, people were going to lose their jobs, but they never ever analyse the fundamental reform of the problem that caused this in the first place, starting back on that November 29, 1993, and going back as far as the 65 tax increases that are so laughed off by members opposite, as if a tax increase has a great virtue.

They're always asking us for tax impact studies. When Nixon introduced the commercial tax, were there any studies? No, none. It didn't matter. "We're doing it." This gang across the way talks about going too fast, not reflecting before you act. What happened? We had all that reflection through those years and what did it lead to? More inaction; in fact paralysis.

It's absolutely hilarious, absurd in fact, to listen to the remarks of the member for Fort York trying to reconstruct history when you can't reconstruct realities which bring about the root problems we were facing and which we've dealt with pretty effectively, particularly with respect to capping the small business rate increase to 2.5%. It will apply to those businesses that lease their premises, particularly for office buildings, industrial malls, shopping centres, like the Woodbine Centre, which I have had lots of reaction on. They're saying, "Do something about the problem." We did. We acted. We got the 2.5%.

Charities made many, many submissions. What have we done there? We have made specific commitments and put them into this legislation, commitments that deal with the real problem.

It would be nice for once to hear a public policy perspective from across the way that had some real substance to it, that would deal with the real problems as we see them today. I have to tell you, when you look back on the history of this thing, actually from the formation of the old Metro under Fred Gardiner, who was the first chairman of the great Metropolitan Toronto area in those years, when you look at the benchmark for taxation on property based on assessment back in 1953 and you carry it right through to today and you ask the people who have lived in this area for the last 45 years when they were ever going to get any tax relief — and I have to tell you we never hear or see any demonstrations from people in other parts of Metro who were not paying their fair share based on a revised, updated, sophisticated property assessment system that hadn't been updated in a residential area since 1940, and probably since 1965 with industrial and commercial.

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For too long, taxpayers of whatever stripe — residential, industrial, commercial, over all those 45 years — I averaged out, paid at least \$10,000 to 15,000 extra through all those years. That's a very conservative estimate of the amount of money they paid to keep Metro going through the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and into the 1990s. Not once did we see, in all those years from those two previous governments across the way, any recognition of the problem, hardly any recognition, particularly when you look at Scarborough or East York or York or the old city of Etobicoke on its industrial assessment base.

People would say to me, "Why is it that all the industry we have, all the manufacturing we have in many of those buildings in north Etobicoke, in east Scarborough, why are they vacant suddenly?" You didn't have to be much of a theoretical physicist to figure that out. Your square footage was much higher, probably \$1.50 higher, trying to keep businesses in the old Metro Toronto region, compared to so many of them going across to Pickering, Vaughan or Mississauga.

This legislation not only deals with some of those problems, but the previous three bills did. From my perspective, you have here a natural evolution of change, trying to introduce a degree of fairness and equity into a system that had become so antiquated that the industrial health, the very economic vibrancy of communities was being lost all through those years while Nero fiddled, while Premier Peterson didn't deal with the issue, while Premier Rae tried to deal with it but turned and retreated.

Now that we're making some of these changes, what do we hear from the opposition members? "It's a bad system." "You can't do this." "You can't make these changes, because if you do, you'll never resolve the issue."

So you ask them, what is a fundamental policy alternative that they have that would be just as workable and

wouldn't have as many of the glitches that you do find in a complex property reform assessment system that this province and this government had to take and redo over the last year-and-a-half, over three million properties?

We hear a lot of criticism about how they weren't properly assessed. If you look at the basic, fundamental concept of how you assess a property under current value assessment, the phrase basically tells you that you're going to take the current values of properties in those areas, whether they be residential, commercial or industrial, and you will compare them on a comparative basis. You can do that using sophisticated computer modelling analysis. You do not have to go out and visit each and every property. Where there are errors, you can have an appeal system, and that's what we've put in place. Not only that, we responded to the business community, to those that felt their assessment wasn't done correctly. We've moved the appeal period to July 29.

Now we're hearing, "You had to do that," but I come back to the basic, fundamental problem that both of these parties have failed to grapple with. If this particular proposal, if these initiatives in these bills aren't sufficiently effective in dealing with the problem, then what do they have as a specific policy alternative that would have done it better? Not the nitpicking we keep hearing across the way, nitpicking in many instances. What would be the fundamental system that they would replace current value assessment with, that would enhance and, have across the whole system, equity and fairness? To me, they must be against that, because they cling to the old system of the status quo.

Finally, let me conclude by stating that not only have we achieved many of the things that should have been done years and years ago — and possibly we wouldn't have some of the major adjustments or readjustments that are occurring throughout this whole change exercise if these two parties had exercised some real courage politically, some real judgement and said, "Let's go for it, let's get some reform into our commercial and industrial areas first at least," so that we would have stopped the bleeding, the loss of jobs throughout the greater Metro region back in the late 1980s and 1990s.

We wouldn't have some of the large areas that have been plowed under because the factory light and the factory height of these buildings isn't sufficiently adaptable to the new economy of the just-in-time ordering system you have in many areas of the economy, whether it be food processing or automotive parts. But no, we didn't even get that kind of response.

As far as I'm concerned, despite some of the problems that we still have in the legislation, we have made a fundamental revision, a fundamental reform that should have been undertaken years ago and we wouldn't have had the massive job losses we experienced in those years. I think this is a good bill that we need to get moving on.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Ruprecht: I think the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale is painting a pretty black-and-white picture. From his perspective, his party is totally right and the opposition

parties of course are totally wrong. Just a comment on this.

I think, Madam Speaker, you will agree that he doesn't totally have the wisdom of Solomon. At the same time, let me point out that he's not totally wrong. Nobody says you're totally wrong; there are some things that you are right in. But our job on this side is to try to ensure that the system gets to be better, and nobody should deny us that responsibility or that opportunity. I would think you would agree even with that.

Let me make just two short points. First, you're talking about being fairly sensitive in terms of operating this new law. You're saying, "We were sensitive in our reforms." That's your quote, I think. Let me ask the member, if you were so sensitive, why is it then that, before the changes in Toronto, we had businesses that were facing bankruptcy? Before the changes we had some restaurants south of Steeles and equivalent restaurants north of Steeles, but the ones south of Steeles in Metro Toronto were paying \$27,000 more in terms of taxes. I'm not sure that was the right thing for you to do. It certainly was not very sensitive.

Secondly, you raised the whole issue of assessment. We don't want to be nitpicking, no doubt about that, but at the same time you can't start a whole process which is fundamental, as you say, major tax realignments and shifts, and then say, "We're going to have one phone number and just a few meetings in the areas." You can expect the people to make the phone calls and they can't get through.

1650

Mr Marchese: To the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale: This particular bill has nothing to do with jobs but it has a lot to do with taxes. Maybe he'll clarify, who knows?

The market value assessment system is a bad system. It is continually in flux. It will always fluctuate. You can never rely on that system. I argue that a tax regime is bad for business but an unstable tax regime is even worse, and that's what you get with market value assessment. These are business people who say these kinds of things, not me.

Market value assessment is a system that hopefully one day will be eliminated. We need to get out of the property tax system the cost for housing, the cost for education, the cost for welfare and the cost for child care. It should not be borne by the property owner and the tenant. If you eliminate those things and gradually remove them and replace them with an income tax system, which we argue is fair, it will make the property tax assessment system fair and stable.

What Toronto now has is a current value assessment system on the one hand, a tax rate that has nothing to do with it on the other hand, and not a bloody clue about what will happen in three years when this deal runs out. That's what we've got. We have no sense of what we're doing under the guise of this fundamental reform. They don't even know what they're doing. They have no clue what they're doing.

Bill 16 corrects some problems; it will create others. We need hearings. People need to demand hearings of these people so they can get their views heard.

Mr Newman: It's a pleasure to comment on the speech by the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. I always enjoy his comments and his well-researched speeches. Being a member from Etobicoke, which is in the new city of Toronto, as I am a member from Scarborough, I know he is seeing the positive benefits of the budgetary measures of this government.

In the budget it said that we were going to cut provincial business education taxes by more than \$500 million from the current level, starting with a \$64-million cut this calendar year. The cut in 1999 will be \$128 million and the balance will be phased in over the remainder of the eight-year program.

I think it's important — and I know the member would want to note this; he probably didn't have enough time to mention it — that in Toronto the 1998 tax cut on the industrial side will be \$14 million. The cut in the year 2005 — that would be at the end of the eight-year phase-in period — will actually be \$112 million over that eight-year plan. That would actually be a cut of 50.6% in education taxes for industrial property taxpayers in Toronto.

On the commercial side within Toronto, the 1998 tax cut will be just a little over \$36 million. That figure in 2005 will be \$290 million. That's a significant saving to the industrial and commercial property taxpayers in Toronto. That reduction will be 25.3%.

We're seeing that the property taxes with this bill for industrial and commercial property taxpayers are being capped at 2.5% for the next three years. It's important to keep in mind that in the 10 years from 1985 to 1995 average property taxes rose 8% under the Liberal and NDP governments.

Mr Marchese: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I don't believe there's a quorum in the House. Would you check?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs Marion Boyd): Clerk, would you check to see if there's a quorum.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Madam Speaker, a quorum is not present.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Yorkview.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I also rise to make some comments on the presentation by the member from Etobicoke-Rexdale. I truly believe that every time a member rises to speak in this House on a particular matter, especially on something like Bill 16 — the member spoke with a lot of conviction, believing everything the bill is supposed to do. I don't blame him, because it's a government document.

But I have to tell the member that when members on the government side addressed the opposition side and said, "You never said anything, you never proposed anything," I beg to differ, because on many occasions we did say, "Look, if you're going to do it, do it right." It proved

us right and it proved the government wrong, because we said: "How you're doing it is wrong. You've got to take time. You've got to listen to the people. You've got to listen to what we say." Not because we are the opposition; once we are in this House, we are all in here for the same reason.

The actions of the business community, the protests, proved us right and proved the government wrong, because immediately Harris and company said: "Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa. We were wrong, so let's try to do it right." What did they do? In haste, they tried to bring in a rush of amendments, and still they didn't get it right.

When we make presentations in this House, we do it with the full conviction that we want to be right. I don't fault the member for espousing the government side of the story. But let me tell you that in its haste the government has created more problems than existed before, and they have only deferred the problem instead of solving it.

The Acting Speaker: Response, member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Mr Hastings: I'd like to thank the members for Downsview, Fort York and Scarborough Centre for their remarks.

I was quite astounded by the comments by the member for Fort York, that this bill has nothing to do with jobs, that high levels or low levels of taxation have nothing to do with jobs. They have everything to do with jobs. Go back and take a look at Economics 101, member for Fort York. My goodness. The higher your taxes, it's quite obvious it's one of the major overheads for small business people to compete with. If they can't have a reasonable tax environment that's going down, not up, as it was under your regime, no wonder they leave.

That was one of the problems we found when we looked at all the vacant space in manufacturing in a lot of the suburban areas of Metro Toronto, because the square footage was higher than in Mississauga, York region, Pickering. Guess what? When a businessperson makes a decision whether they're going to stay or leave, they're going to stay based on competitive tax rates and competitive rental rates. If it's within 50 to 75 cents, they could probably live with it, but when it's 50% to 800% higher, as I could go back through the material, you'd see why the old Metro Toronto was bleeding to death industrially, why people had to go to the regions for the jobs.

It's basic elementary economics, my man. I can't believe that you lived through it and didn't see it. That's why this bill is part of the rebuilding exercise, to get this province going again.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Parkdale.

Mr Baird: Here's Tony the Taxfighter.

Mr Ruprecht: At one time when we talked about tax fighters I thought it would only refer to one person; that was Mike Harris. Now you're suddenly saying Tony Ruprecht is a tax fighter.

Mr Baird: Tony the Tax Hiker.

Mr Ruprecht: Now he's changing his mind in mid-stream. No, I think I heard you correctly, but I'm not going to accept that at this time.

We hear a lot about the reforms in taxes, and before us is Bill 16. For the members who are still here and who heard the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale speaking, let me put on record what neither a biased organization nor a biased political party said, because you can always slough that off. You can say, "Well, he's a member of the NDP," or "He's a member of the Liberals and they're in opposition," or "He's got an axe to grind," or "Because there's an interest group out there."

Mr Baird: "You forgot to raise my taxes two times."
1700

Mr Ruprecht: I'm just pointing out to you that when I give you this particular quote, you're not going to be able to say, "That is a biased organization," because we know there are many, in fact there are hundreds of interest groups here right now trying to bias the process. There are hundreds of interest groups here right now trying to change legislation. We all know that. But this group is unbiased and I'll tell you who they are. They are the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario. Have you heard about that organization? That is an unbiased organization and I would even think that many of their members are leaning more towards the right than further to the left.

I'm simply saying let's see what they have to say about Bill 16. Let's see what they have to say about your specific tax bills, those fundamental changes you're coming here today to talk about. They say the following:

"The new system on the property tax (1) will be immensely complicated by creating 84 classes and sub-classes and up to 156 tax rates."

What does that sound like to you? Does that sound like a reasonable number? Does that sound as though you're doing a good thing? Does that sound like the platform you should be supporting?

"(2) Implementation on January 1, 1998, is a high-risk strategy."

This is from an unbiased group. What do you say about that? I hear speaker after speaker getting up today and praising Bill 16 and saying how wonderful it is and that we've taken the right courageous steps, but how do you answer those questions? How do you answer those points of criticism?

Should we not say, "Look, let's make the process better"? What's the answer to that? Do you know what I hear? I hear absolute silence. Do you know why I hear absolute silence? It's because there is no answer. You don't have an answer. You have nothing to say about Bill 16 when it comes to these criticisms. What's your answer to the charge of the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario? What's your answer, my friends? I hear nada, which means I hear nothing from you.

"(3) This new tax strategy will create serious problems."

If you were so organized that you wanted to push Bill 16 through quickly without public hearings, if you wanted

to push Bill 16 through without any input from the opposition parties, then why would there be serious problems? Would you not want us, as we have in the past, to make recommendations to you to make the system smooth, to make it balanced, to make it more acceptable to the people of Ontario? Of course you would want to do that. But your answer, again, is silence. There's nothing from the benches when the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario says there will be serious problems. Quietness, nothing.

Their response to this bill is:

"(4) This bill is a recipe" — and guess what? — "for administrative chaos."

That is a serious charge. Can you imagine that? Here is an unbiased organization of treasurers and administrators and they're saying that this Conservative bill is a recipe for administrative chaos.

Why would they say that? Some of them are members of your party. I know a couple of them personally. They're saying "administrative chaos." Again I ask, what's the answer on the other side? What do I hear from the other side? What do I see on the other side? I hear nothing, I see nothing, because you are just like the three monkeys. That's what they said, "We see nothing, we hear nothing and we speak nothing." There is nothing. Look at that, there's nothing. There's no response. Do you know why there's no response, Madam Speaker? Simply because the association is correct when it says there will be a recipe for administrative chaos.

Finally, to conclude what the municipal clerks and treasurers said:

"(5) This is downloading the government's confusion and indecision to the municipalities."

I think these are pretty serious charges. They come from a group of people who are not just receiving increases in their house taxes or a group of people who have an axe to grind. No. They're administrators on a day-to-day basis who have to administer the results of you, of this Legislature, passing this specific bill.

How will they do it? Will they have problems? You bet they will have problems. They will have big, gigantic problems and they're pointing it out to you here.

What is the response? Is the response a sensitive response, as the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale said earlier? "We've made sensitive responses and reforms so that there will be justice and equality in Ontario when it comes to taxes." The response to this is nothing. The response to this isn't going to be changes.

I'll tell you what happened in Toronto. The reason we were accused of being scaremongers is that it's an easy way out for the government: "The opposition, what do they do? They're nothing but a bunch of bums. They're nothing but a bunch of scarecrows. They're nothing but a bunch of scaremongers." That's easy to say. But let's remember where we came from. We came from a recommendation by this government that there will be a number of taxes and increases for businesses that will put them out of business.

The question I have in terms of continuing my dialogue with you is, why did you have to scare the mom-and-pop operations? Why did you have to scare the small business owners of Ontario out of their wits so that they had no other recourse — you wouldn't listen — but to go on the barricades and have demonstrations with Canadian flags, with banners and signs? You know why? Not because you were "sensitive." No. It was because they had no other way to express themselves in the dead of winter. It was cold out there. I know, I was out there walking with them, speaking with them, trying to reassure them that yes, there will be a way that we will be able to put some sense into this government. Of course, I will give this government some credit: They listened. But at what cost?

Applause.

Mr Ruprecht: Mr Klees just walked in.

I never said you were totally wrong. I never said that. I've just responded to your being sensitive with these reforms, because you are not. Just remember this: What was your response in the first week to the people on the streets demonstrating in the cold of winter? Nothing. "We hear nothing, we see nothing and we speak nothing." In the second week the pressure mounted. Thousands more joined us in the streets. What was your response in the second week? "We see nothing, we hear nothing and we speak nothing." What was your response in the third week to this government Bill 16? What was your response to the thousands of residents who were demonstrating out there against tax reform the way you wanted to implement it? In the third week: "See nothing, hear nothing and speak nothing."

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): That's consistent.

Mr Ruprecht: That's right. You were consistent, all right. In other words, what happened when the pressure really mounted and they were beginning to have demonstrations in the east in Scarborough, in the west in Etobicoke, in the north in North York? Down in the area I represent there were six demonstrations. You don't even know, and you will never know, how many there really were, because they were massive and even to this point they haven't given up, except that you've mitigated the situation a bit to the point where there have been some changes proposed, that is true. But at what cost, my friends? The cost was — you could have done it sooner. In fact, you could have done it without the imbalances in the system.

Why were they out there demonstrating? Because their livelihoods were at stake, that's why. They were going to go bankrupt. When you walk across some of the streets, on Dupont, on Bloor, on St Clair, you see what the response would have been because you saw the first stages of the development already. What was the response? Windows shut, papers on the windows, businesses closed, that was the response, and you knew it was coming. Then suddenly you became more sensitive? No; because there were thousands of people out there.

1710

We're now talking about the reforms and I'm only hoping and praying, while I would obviously like to freeze it right now — I know that won't be possible because the government has a majority and consequently has a right to make the changes, whatever they prefer to do. But at the same time we have to stop this bulldozer and say: "Hold on. Let's have some reason. Open your eyes, open your ears and then speak. Hold on with the changes because those changes are bankrupting people."

Let's look at some of the issues we want to reform within the system. Let's look at some of these items that can be changed, that can be made more sensitive, that can be made more fair, just and equitable. What are they?

The first thing that needs to be done is the assessment system. What has the government accomplished by this? The government has introduced a bill and said: "Here's the bill. These will be the changes and then we'll have a few forums out in the west end, out in the east end, and here are a few phone numbers you can call." The next thing, obviously, that happened is the people called because they saw their tax bill. They saw the assessment. They said: "Wait a minute. There's a lot of problems here with the assessment."

You remember. You were here before. You can't just get some people into their cars, drive by the properties — they're called windshield assessments — have a quick look and drive away, leaving people holding the bag. Of course that isn't going to take place, is it? I hope that will be straightened out in the future.

My friends, I'm telling you, right now there are thousands of appeals. Why is that? Because the process is backlogged. There are thousands of people appealing and consequently backlogging the process. There are thousands of people right now calling and they can't get a response, calling and they can't get through, calling and there's no one there, calling and there might be, if they're lucky, a tape, calling and nobody answers. That can't be the response of a Reformist government. That can't be the response of a government that wants to be sensitive to the people it represents, and remember the government represents all of Ontario residents.

Obviously, what we have to do is change the assessment system from the way it is organized today. It has to be made more sensitive, more open and have more staff. If you cut, you're going to have to pay the consequences later.

Let me bring out the whole item of why people were really upset when they knew, and they're beginning to find out, that businesses in Toronto, for instance, had to pay three times more than the same and equivalent businesses in other areas outside Metro Toronto. I didn't get through earlier in my remarks when I said that we know of a number of restaurants just south of Steeles Avenue which had to pay \$27,000 more than a restaurant just north of Steeles. That's why when you drive along Steeles Avenue today, and it doesn't matter where you are on Steeles, isn't it funny that the businesses are not on the south side of Steeles? Did you notice that? There are very few

businesses on the south side of Steeles. You noticed that. The majority of the businesses are on the north side of Steeles. Why is that?

Mr Baird: Because the Liberals didn't do anything about it, that's why.

Mr Ruprecht: No. You would think it would be part of municipal planning that businesses working on the north side of the street would in fact —

Mr Baird: But they didn't.

The Acting Speaker: Order, member for Nepean.

Mr Ruprecht: You know what happened? The fact is that the tax rate is so much lower on the north side of Steeles than on the south side of Steeles, and consequently they knew. They walked with their feet. Many business left Toronto, went to the municipalities outside our 416 area code and went to the north, meaning the 905 region, or they went out there because the tax rate was lower. Of course any businessperson would agree, if the tax rate is lower, "I'm moving in that direction."

Can I ask you one question? Let me ask you this question: Was that an intended design to push people into other areas? No, I don't think it was an intended design and you didn't tell me yes or no just now. I heard nothing from the other side. There was no intended design. It simply was a question of the tax rates being lower and people moving. Obviously they move away from an area that is higher into a tax rate that is lower. Is that fair? Is that equitable? You still have a choice and that choice is to make it better.

We just remember, when we ask the question, is it fair — even within Toronto — outside Toronto? The answer is simple. Let's remember one thing. Let's remember where we came from. For those people who might have very short memories, I want to remind you, within Metro Toronto there are 43,680 properties that will have tax hikes of over \$1,000 — that's massive — and then 7,877 properties with a tax hike between \$1,000 and \$5,000; in many cases over 100% more than what they paid last year. Think about that.

Think about a person, and it was referenced in somebody's speeches earlier, if someone suddenly were to tax your house at 100% more, double the rate — and in some cases 200% and 300% more — what would your response be? Would you call that sensitive? No. Would you say: "Is there a different way we can assess this? Is there a different way to ensure there's more fairness and equality in the system?" Yes, there is, but it takes thinking and it takes a way to sit down and work it out with all three parties.

My friends, remember, if you want justice in the system, market value assessment or current assessment is not all that efficient simply because there are many ups and many downs depending on the value in that specific tax year. In 1989, when houses had a higher market value, the tax rate would have risen drastically. In 1994, 1993, 1992, the tax rate would have come down drastically. You cannot have an efficient municipal system in Ontario when these tax rates keep changing.

The only way you can have a stable municipal system is when the municipality knows how much money is going to come in on a stable basis. But these rates, based on

market value or current market value, are changing like a yo-yo. It's almost like you're betting on the commodities market. It's a question of coconut oil today; it's up and it's down. Or coffee beans today, because the weather changes; they're up or they're down. It's basically a system that is not that fair and does not agree with a stable funding formula for the municipality.

That is important to realize because we all know that for a stable market, for a stable municipality, for stable funding, we need a different kind of tax system so that all of us in the municipalities would be able to know how much money is coming in.

We remember that in 1988 the city of North York and the city of Toronto task force made a recommendation, exactly 10 years ago. What was that recommendation? The recommendation was a unit assessment system because unit assessment system is not based on the yo-yo principle and formula on this current value assessment or market value assessment. It creates a more stable system. That's what you want.

We know that now we have a system that is based on wealth creation. We also know, since when do we have a system in taxes that's based on a wealth tax? The Conservatives have introduced a wealth tax to all of those who are homeowners. It's a wealth tax; it has very little to do with a tax that is just and equitable.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Questions and comments?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I agree with the first comment that Mr Ruprecht made in regard to what this bill is really all about. This bill's quite simple. It does one thing. It fixes the mistake that this government caused by moving too quickly, not listening to people, not listening to the many deputants who came before this government, both privately and publicly, and said that when you came forward and you made the changes to the tax system in Toronto, you were going to create a huge mess.

It fixes the mistake of this government not listening, not listening to the people who work at the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs who told you, "If you go the way that you are when you created these two bills, Bill 106 and Bill 149, you're going to have all kinds of problems, you're going to create inequity in the tax system to the point that you're going to turn small business against large, large business against small, and residents against whatever else is going on, because we know, in the end, they're the ones who are going to end up paying the price of all of this."

1720

This bill is not about some high principle of the government all of a sudden saying, "We want to do something to create jobs in Ontario," as Mr Hastings said earlier. This is simply a bill that fixes the mess your government created. Why? Because you did not want to listen to the ministry bureaucrats at the time, at the Ministry of Finance and at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, who said, "If you do what you do under Bill 149 and if you do what you do under Bill 106, you're going to create this mess." That's all that this bill does, pure and simple.

The government can't hide behind high principles, saying, "These are high principles about creating jobs and having the courage to move forward and to address the problems of many years." All this does is fix a problem. The government goofed, the government slipped, the government made a mistake, the government made an error, and for once I would like the government to stand up and say: "We goofed. We admit it." Please do so. Then we could move on.

Mr Baird: I want to say two things. First, I compliment the member for Parkdale. He said: "I give the government credit. They listened." He's right. We are listening. We do hear those voices and are here in this chamber to reflect what we hear.

I listened with great interest to the speech of the member for Parkdale. He talked about restaurants being on one side of Steeles and not on the other, and I wondered what that meant. I thought about it for a moment. In fact, he's right. The restaurants all are on one side of the street and there's a reason for that. It's because an inequitable tax environment was allowed to continue for years. For five years under our friends Mr Peterson et al, nothing happened, nothing, and that inequitable tax treatment was allowed to continue. Do you know what the policy advice of the Peterson government was to make tax treatment more equitable for Toronto?

Mr Marchese: The concentration tax.

Mr Baird: The member for Fort York said, "The commercial concentration tax." He's right: the commercial concentration tax, a tax that whacked Toronto. It was such a bad tax that even the member for Fort York and the member for Cochrane South and all the socialists in the NDP government had to get rid of it. It was brought in by the Liberal government, with the support of the member for Parkdale.

I think you've got to acknowledge one thing, that this government is working hard to ensure that we bring more fairness and more equity to the tax system. No tax system is going to be 100% right and zero per cent negative, but we are working to make it more fair and more equitable.

Mr Sergio: I would also like to compliment the member for Parkdale on his presentation. Every time Tony rises to speak in the House, he brings the particular experience and perspective of his constituents, not only the residential but the business community as well. Very few of us have had the experience Tony has had, including at the municipal level, where he has seen it on both sides. When he says he would like to see a much more balanced, much more acceptable tax system, he means what he is saying, because that would be the right thing to do.

Unfortunately, when he has said this government is listening — they are, but they are not acting on what they are hearing. We have been listening. The opposition, individuals, various groups, professional agencies — you name it — even the people on Bay Street have said to the government: "This is wrong. That is not the way to do it."

With all due respect to the last comments — and I can see that my colleague the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, Mr Palladini, is here. He's

smiling, because he says, "I watch your riding from the north side of Steeles, and I know why," and it's not the concentration tax of the 1980s or the early 1990s. It is this unfair, un-uniform business tax rate which you people, the government, Mr Harris, Mr Eves — you did say "We are going to bring in," and they refused to do it, because the city of Toronto is subsidizing the business people in Mr Palladini's and your area, as well as in the 905, and that is the problem with the city of Toronto. When Mr Ruprecht says it is wrong, he's right.

Mr Marchese: I just wanted to add my two minutes to what the member for Parkdale has said. I would say to the member for Nepean, it's not a matter of these folks listening. Mr Johnson, the Minister of Education, the Premier and others surrendered. They had to surrender to the riots that the business people engaged in in the streets. They were demonstrating in the streets to be heard by this government; otherwise, they would not have listened. But they convert that into, "We listened."

You recall the finance minister speaking to the issue of the differentiated business tax rate for education purposes on their buildings, and Mr Eves said on February 5:

"Let me be blunt about what Toronto wants us to do. Toronto is asking us to make the rest of the province responsible for the cumulative impact of decades of irresponsible spending decisions and questionable programs approved by successive Toronto councils and school boards.

"Toronto is asking us to make businesses and municipalities in the rest of the province pay the freight for the fact that Toronto politicians raised spending year after year and took the easy way by loading taxes on business."

That's what the finance minister had to say then. He wasn't listening at the time. He said, "I'm not going to listen."

The education folks were raising their own money for education; they got no money from the province. But these people make it appear that they were giving money to the board of education, and they were not. The money that was applied to businesses was going back to the board of education, to the teachers and to those who worked in the board of education. They make it appear different.

But all of a sudden Mr. Eves is listening. They're listening. No, I say: They surrendered because they had to surrender.

The Speaker: I think that's four responses. The member for Parkdale has two minutes.

Mr Ruprecht: First of all, thank you very much for the comments you have made to my suggestions and my comments. Let me say briefly that the changes in Bill 16 are fairly massive, and I would like to have a response to this: If you agree with the 2.5% cap on businesses, then equally why should there not be a 2.5% cap for residential properties? What about the education portion of the tax? That was also fairly massive, because you recognized there was a very major and massive injustice within the tax rate.

To sum up, you would think that the recommendations you have made, the changes you are now proposing, were a response to a partial mess you left behind in other bills.

This is a response to the mess in Bills 106, 149, 160 and 164. It's supposed to fix those bills. In the meantime, Bill 16 has other massive changes and recommendations, and we'll see what happens at the committee stage.

You think what you've done here is mitigate the problem to such an extent that the riots have calmed down. I ask you simply this: You know what happened just yesterday in front of city hall at the city of Toronto. There were 400 to 500 demonstrators saying, "It is totally unfair that I have to pay 100% more for my house than my neighbour." It's not simply a question of the assessment rate problem; it's a question of unfairness. They were not there simply to argue for themselves. They were there because they knew that when they show up and put pressure on the municipal government it reverberates here to Queen's Park, and the recommendations —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I would like to correct my own record. This afternoon, in response to a question, I indicated that learning materials submitted are to be written by a Canadian citizen or citizens or permanent residents of Canada and produced or manufactured in Canada. The appropriate response, I've now found out, is that learning materials submitted are to be written by a Canadian citizen or citizens, or permanent residents of Canada, or produced or manufactured in Canada.

1730

Mr Bisson: I want to take these few minutes that we have now with the change of rules where members have 20 minutes to be able to respond to very, very large policy areas. That's what this is, because to stretch a picture so that people can understand what this bill is all about, quite frankly, would take the better part of an hour because this is such a long story.

Maybe we should try to tell that story. Maybe this is the way to do this. We go back to 1993, and back in 1993, at that time, the then NDP government was moving an order to move to the market value assessment argument. Do you remember that? They were going to put forward legislation that changed the assessment system in the city of Toronto in order to make it match with what was in place in most other places across the province. At that time I remember, because like you, Mr Speaker, and like my good friends Mr Marchese and Mrs Boyd, we were here in this Legislature at the time.

At the time the opposition, then the Conservatives and Liberals, said: "If the government moves by way of market value assessment it's going to create havoc in the city of Toronto. It's going to create a tax shift" —

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: I like the way you're pointing: "Not me."

"It's going to create a tax shift from the businesses and communities over to residents. People are going to see their municipal taxes skyrocket to the point that it would be absurd to look at their new tax bills as they come in."

Do you remember the red Stop signs the business community had in their windows across the city of Toronto that said, "Stop MVA"? It was all over the city of

Toronto. I remember then as a government member coming back to caucus meetings and saying: "Bob, my Premier, I see these signs in windows. I go to restaurants and I talk to restaurant owners who say that they're afraid their taxes are going to go up tremendously because of moving to market value assessment." I remember those days.

I remember walking down the streets of the city of Toronto and it was the buzz on the street. People were saying: "You have to stop MVA. If you move forward with MVA, you're going to bankrupt businesses in our community and you're going to drive people out of their homes."

You know one of the people who was raising the charge? Do you remember, member for Fort York?

Mr Marchese: There were a few.

Mr Bisson: There were a few. We're not going to talk about one particular individual who I see right now, but there were others in the same caucus. I will not name names. I have to be nice. But there was in the third party, I remember, a huge proponent of stopping MVA at the time, and that was none other than Mike Harris, the leader of the third party.

Mr Turnbull, the now government whip, and a whole bunch of Tory members who were in here along with the Liberals said at the time: "If you go the way of MVA, you're going to raise taxes in the city of Toronto through the roof. You're going to bankrupt businesses. You're going to shift tax responsibility on to residential property taxpayers to the point that people may in some cases have to sell their homes and move into apartments or move into other communities." I remember.

I was at those caucus meetings. I remember the debate that was going on at the time because members like Mr Marchese, Ms Lankin and other members from the Metro caucus of the then NDP government came in and said: "Bob, we can't do this. We've got a problem. If we do this, it's going to be a problem to the people living in the city of Toronto, the people in the downtown."

What happened? The government of the day decided that the member for Fort York, the member from Beaches-Woodbine, the member for Riverdale and other members from Toronto, the member for Dovercourt, were right, and also Mike Harris was right. In fact you couldn't try to turn around a tax system overnight the way it was being proposed under the MVA act.

I remember that debate really well because I remember the Tories were part of the group that was charging an order to not go to MVA. I remember all the debates. They said, "If elected as the Ontario government in the next election, this government will not go the way of MVA." I remember that promise. I remember it well.

Mr Turnbull, the now government whip, was one of the big proponents who said they weren't going to do it, along with a whole bunch of other Tory candidates in the downtown core who then ran on the Tory ticket — the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Mr Leach; the former Minister of Industry Trade and Technology, Mr Saunderson; the member for St Andrew-St Patrick, Ms Bassett

and others — ran on a ticket of not doing MVA. What did they do when they got elected a little bit more than a year later?

Mr Marchese: They surrendered too.

Mr Bisson: They surrendered.

They say: "Hang on a second. That was then, this is now. This is not a promise kept. No, we're not going to worry about that. We're going to figure out how we're going to get out of this. We're going to call it 'actual value assessment' or 'current value assessment.'" They decided on CVA — AVA, CVA, MVA, it's all the same because what you're doing is you're switching the tax assessment responsibility from one group of citizens on to the others.

What you ended up with was a government that said when they were in opposition that they were opposed to MVA and they wanted to get rid of it. They were the big proponents to cancel the initiative of the government of the day and they were going to fight, and if they were to become government, no way, they weren't going to do MVA. They came back and they did something else. They created current value assessment and they created the mess that we're in right now.

At the time the Tories were right. What did they predict? Do you remember what they predicted in 1993? They said that if you go the way of MVA, CVA, AVA or whatever the heck it might be, you're going to end up transferring the tax assessment from the downtown business core, the high office towers, giving them a break, and you're going to be transferring it on to the mom-and-pop operations and the residents of this city. That's what you were saying then. It's not what you're saying now.

Mr Marchese: They didn't know it was going to do that, actually, which makes the incompetence even worse.

Mr Bisson: We could get into that debate, but the point I make is this is a very different position that the now Tory caucus is taking than they took back in 1993.

I remember, because I was in this chamber not more than two weeks ago when we had the throne speech. Ernie Eves, when he read his budget — remember that? — five or six times in the budget said, "A promise made, a promise kept." How come the Tory government has a problem in not understanding that this is not a question of a promise made, a promise kept? This is a case of a promise made, a promise broken. You broke the confidence of the people in the downtown core in the city of Toronto who voted for you, in part, on the basis of your opposition, what you did when you were campaigning against MVA.

They did the same thing with rent control. I don't even want to get into that debate. Do you remember rent control? They were all opposed to cancelling rent control and they were going to fortify rent control and make it really good. A promise made, a promise kept? No, a promise made, a promise broken. We've got no more rent control, but that's for another debate.

Mr Marchese: They just called it a tenant protection package and that's how they solved that.

Mr Bisson: They changed names. It's like AVA, CVA, MVA, rent control, tenant protection. They figure it's all the same, but people aren't fooled by that.

The Speaker: Member for Cochrane South, this is not a conversation.

Mr Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. The member for Fort York is trying to be very helpful, I thought, but point well taken. He's here to help.

What we have here is a government that said one thing while they were in opposition, another thing when they got the government.

Where are we at? This government decided that they were going to break their election promise and they were going to come in by way of Bill 106 and create what ended up being CVA. They've done this and they created a problem. We told them at the time, as they had told us when we were in government, "If you do this, you're going to have a whole bunch of problems."

But never mind that they didn't listen to the NDP. The part I really find fascinating is that I know the people who work at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and the people who work at the Ministry of Finance would have given the government the same advice they gave us: "Don't do this. You're going to have a problem. If you create this thing that you want to call AVA, CVA, that is MVA, what you're going to end up doing is creating the problems you talked about when you were in opposition."

No, they didn't want to listen. They weren't going to listen to the bureaucrats, because one thing about this government you learn really quickly is they do not trust people who work for the civil service; they are called "bureaucrats." They don't think those people can ever give any kind of good advice to this Tory government because the Tories have the answers for everything.

I'll tell you something. There are a lot of competent people who work in the government service of Ontario who are there to give very good advice to the government of the day, let it be NDP, Liberal or Conservative. They're there and they're a very non-partisan group, by and large, and they give you good advice. But this government doesn't want to take it half of the time, so they end up introducing legislation, as they did when they introduced Bill 106 and later Bill 149, that created the mess we're in now. The government has to come back in and introduce this Bill 16 to fix the mess they created.

What did you do? Did you manage to fix the problem with the tax assessment system in downtown Toronto? I would say not. I was listening to Mr Hastings, the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, who was here saying: "We're doing this because it's going to fix it and it's going to create lots of jobs in Toronto. The reason you never had lots of jobs being created in Toronto before was because of the assessment system that was in place in the city of Toronto."

What nonsense. It's as if there had never been a job created in the city of Toronto in the past 100 years if you were to listen to the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. Toronto has been known for how many years as the economic centre of Canada?

Mr Marchese: Still is.

Mr Bisson: Still is, has been and was under the old system of tax assessment. Do you think that this new tax

assessment system is going to change the position of Toronto when it comes to being the economic leader it is?

Mr Marchese: Only if you listen to them.

Mr Bisson: If you listen to the Tories, you might even believe in Santa Claus. There is a Santa Claus, for little people watching.

Interjections.

1740

Mr Bisson: That's real parliamentary language, I'll tell you. You have to listen to the heckling in this chamber to really understand. I can't say the words he's saying. He's saying something along the line of, "It's because you didn't have the — blank — to do it." It says everything about this government because they think having intestinal fortitude is what it takes to be a good government, but that's not what it takes to be a good government. What it takes to be a good government is being able to develop sound policies with the work of the people who work within your caucus, the people who work within your ministries, the general public and the opposition, and coming up with good policy that works.

But this legislation you put before us, Bill 106 and Bill 149, doesn't work. You created a mess by removing the business occupancy tax and you created a mess by trying to change the system of assessment in this province to the point that now we're going to get how many appeals because of how quickly you put together the assessment system and did the assessments in this province.

I look at what's happened across the province. The government of Ontario, when they did Bill 106, said: "Oh, we want to fix this thing. We don't want to do MVA, we're going to do CVA." Then they charged the assessors of this province, good people that they are, "We want you to go out and do the reassessment of the entire province of Ontario in one year."

I know what was said to you by the Ministry of Finance, and I know what was said and the advice that was given to your cabinet by the people who gave you advice about that plan. People within the Ministry of Finance said: "We can do it, but it's going to be full of mistakes. We'll give you numbers in a year, but don't rely on the numbers that we give you because there will be lots of mistakes made." Mistakes cost money because we're going to have appeal after appeal and it's going to cost us probably more money to try to deal with that mess as a result of trying to fix the one mess.

But again they didn't want to listen: "No, don't listen to bureaucrats. They don't know anything. We know everything. I'm Mike Harris. I'm the cabinet. Bureaucracy can't give any good advice."

Experts in the field, people in the private sector, your own buddies told you: "You can't do a reassessment in one year. You can't do it properly." How many properties do you have to assess in a period of a year? You can't do it. There are too many buildings and too many properties to be assessed properly in a period of one year.

What ends up happening is the government, because it rushed, did all of this assessment in one year and we're starting to find right now, as we speak, that people are

lining up in droves at the assessment offices across Ontario and are saying, "Hey, my assessment is wrong."

They're picking up their assessment and they're saying: "Okay, I have a three-bedroom house. This is about the year I bought it and this is what I've got in it. I've got an attached garage and I have so many square feet and I paid so much money for it." They say, "Okay, I've got to pay \$2,500 in assessment." Then they sit down with their neighbour and they say, "Neighbour, did you see your assessment?" The neighbour says, "Yeah, I've got a house just like yours and I'm paying \$1,800 in taxes." "I'm paying \$2,500. What's going on?"

So they start looking. They've both got an attached garage; they've both got a three-bedroom house; they both have brick in the front; they all have siding on the side; they all have interlocking brick in the driveway; they have no pool in the backyard; they built the fence together, they share the same fence and they say: "How come? Why? What's going on? You're paying \$2,500 and I'm paying \$1,800. What do I do?" So what do they do? They often call the office of the MPP.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: They call the office of the member for Nepean and they say, "I've got a problem. My neighbour's paying less taxes than me and he has the same house. What do I do?" What advice do we give them? "You must appeal. Go and appeal. Go to the Ministry of Finance office, the assessment office and launch an appeal." We told them that was going to happen, but they didn't want to listen.

On the question of the business occupancy tax, much the same issue. The part that really galls me about this whole issue — before I even get to the BOT — the part that really gets me about changing the tax system in the city of Toronto, because I didn't agree with our own government when we were doing it, is that there is a historical and a financial reality to how the system of taxation was set up for the people in the municipality of Toronto, and that was really simple.

In the city of Toronto you have a lot of office towers, a concentration of businesses and business offices in the city of Toronto like nowhere else in Ontario. Can you imagine the city of Timmins or Nepean or Kapuskasing or Sarnia or anywhere else having the kind of commercial concentration, business concentration, in their downtown that we have here in downtown Toronto? I know my municipal council would love to have that amount of assessment, because that would mean that the taxes that would have to be collected from residents in the city of Timmins would be a lot lower.

The point is simply this: In the city of Toronto they set up an assessment system and they kept it the way it was for years because they are very different than anywhere else in the province. They have a large amount of commercial and business assessment downtown. They have multi-unit office towers. What they're able to do is spread the tax burden throughout all of that commercial assessment in a way that means that residents in the city of Toronto pay lower taxes. What's wrong with that?

The business owners and the people who work in the towers and the corporations that rent the offices in the business towers utilize the infrastructure of the city of Toronto. The city of Toronto provides a good system of transit and roads and everything else that's needed to run a dynamic city. They say: "We've got this huge amount of assessment, so rather than taxing our individual property owners" — they made a decision years ago — "we will tax at a certain level the businesses within the commercial area and we will make sure that Mrs Smith who lives on Cumberland Drive doesn't have to pay \$3,000 worth of taxes. Maybe she'll only have to pay \$1,100." What's wrong with that? What's wrong with the city saying, "We have an assessment base that is rich commercially and business-wise, and we will give our residents a tax break"?

That's why they never went to MVA. That's why Toronto said, "Hey, hang on," when the MVA tax system was devised. That's why they didn't go to MVA, because they said: "Listen, we like the way it is. We have a huge amount of concentration of business and commercial tax and we want to be able to give a break to our residents."

Mike Harris has changed that. Mike Harris says, "No, no, everybody's going to be on MVA," or CVA or AVA, because it's all the same thing. Now everybody is going to pay according to market value. What a mess that has created. We're going to see residents who own property in the downtown area of Toronto have huge tax increases over the next number of years. Businesses, without this particular bill, Bill 16, would have seen their taxes skyrocket as well.

What this bill does is create a cap for those businesses that are going to get tax hikes and create a cap for those people who get tax decreases at the amount of 2.5%. Why do you do that? You do that because of the mess that you created when you created Bill 149. It was Bill 149 that did the BOT.

For the members of the government to come in here and say to us, "Bill 16 is because we listened and we're adjusting the system, we're doing all those wonderful things to help people out there," what this bill is about is simply this: fixing a mistake you made when you created the system.

If I have the time, I just want to go through the dictionary to describe what the word "mistake" means. There are four different definitions. Mistakes are caused by bad judgement or disregard to rules of principle; or it's a blunder, which is a careless, stupid or gross mistake, an action suggesting awkwardness, pettiness or ignorance; or you did an error, which means it was unintentional, wandering or deviation from accuracy; or you made a slip, usually a minor mistake made through haste or carelessness. Which one was it?

Did you make a blunder, did you make a slip, did you make an error, did you make a mistake? I would tend to say they all apply.

This government has always moved in haste. Because of moving in haste, they didn't listen to good advice. Because they didn't take good advice, they made a mis-

take. Now we're having to take legislative time to come back and fix the mistake the Tories made because of moving too quickly and not listening to people. Now they're trying to put a spin on it. They're trying to say, "Oh, we listened." I don't think so. This is a question that you made a mistake. You're having to come back and you're having to fix it. Let's get on with the business of fixing the problem for the people of the city of Toronto because, God knows, they need it.

1750

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Baird: I listened with great interest to my colleague the member for Cochrane South's remarks.

"To give them credit" — this government — "they've listened." Those aren't the member for Nepean's words. They are not the minister's words. Those words come from the Liberal member for Parkdale who said that this government listened and that we deserve credit for that, and I agree with him. I thanked him and acknowledged that when he was here earlier.

I listened with great interest. He said that here in the city of Toronto the local council said, "Let's give our residential taxpayers a break and whack business." And they wonder why the businesses go to Vaughan, why they go to Clarington, to Ajax, to Pickering, to Mississauga, to Oakville. Because they were taxed out of business. That's why these changes are so important.

This government has said that we will bring the municipalities with commercial-industrial taxes and education taxes higher than the provincial average to that average. For my home region that will mean a 12.7% tax cut for industrial taxpayers. Here in Toronto it will mean 50% for industrial and 25% for commercial to end that problem.

The NDP's policy and the Liberals' policy said, when it was broken: "Don't fix it. Go away and leave it alone. The status quo rules." That is something those of us on this side of the House were simply not prepared to allow to stand. We're not prepared to leave this broken system. That is something that is very important: that we pursue a fair and equitable plan.

To give the member for Cochrane South credit, he disagreed with the Liberal concentration tax on Toronto, the Liberal tax that drove jobs out of Toronto, and even he voted to get rid of it.

Mr Sergio: I want to congratulate the member for Cochrane South for his usual good presentation and knowledge of the issues when we debate them in the House.

Let me relate a particular situation I encountered yesterday with the new proposed, revised, amended system. There's a small coffee shop on Weston Road, just behind my constituency office. He said yesterday, "How come business taxes went up \$840?" I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "I have this letter from the landlord that my business taxes went up \$840." Unfortunately, the letter didn't say if that was business taxes or realty taxes.

This is a big problem. This is what this government has been unloading on to the local municipalities. It's pitting tenants versus property owners, because now they have no idea what the business portion is, if there is indeed an increase or not. As a matter of fact there could be some landlords out there who are getting an increase in their realty property taxes, and now they want to pass that on to the tenants and make it appear as a business tax, which is totally unfair.

It is one of those problems that we knew would be happening. We said to the government, "If you do it, do it right." As my colleague from Parkdale was saying, "They are listening but they are not acting," and now we have the proof. They have been saying: "Mea culpa. We were wrong. We have to rectify it." So what do they do? They bring in another rush of amendments — wrong again. Why? Because they are not listening. We are giving good advice, but unfortunately they have their agenda. That's the way they want it. They want to continue to divide and

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Marchese: I thank the member for Cochrane South for adding his perspective to this debate and would add several things.

Bill 16 corrects the incompetence of this government vis-à-vis Bill 106 and Bill 149. That's what this bill does. It corrects a problem they have caused with other bills. It corrects issues of gross leases, and there isn't enough time to get into that. It corrects the issue of the differentiated business tax on education, which they have created by taking control of education. They now need to correct that particular problem, and they're doing that. They have also solved in part the problems that charities would have faced, caused by the two previous bills, and they have somewhat solved the problem for small business by putting a cap on the tax increases they otherwise would have faced. I say "corrected partially" because this issue will come back to us three years hence to be dealt with again.

Bill 16 is not a permanent solution, but a part-time solution to get the Tories through this year and through the next election. We are coming back to this issue later because once the cap is removed three years hence, we've got a problem again to deal with, but it solves it for them temporarily. So they have surrendered to the public, based on the incompetence of the other bills, but they have caused problems in the small business capping, which will come back. They have caused serious problems by way of appeals that are in the thousands, because the assessors they used were simply inadequately trained and too few to do the job of assessing four million properties. That is why we need hearings, so the public can be heard.

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I listened with interest to the remarks of the honourable member opposite. I've listened also to the questions and comments that have followed those remarks. It seems that our friends opposite are members who just won't take yes for an answer. This bill responds to the concerns that have been raised by the people of this province over the last few months on

various areas of policy, and very neatly brings about solutions to each one of those areas of concern.

I met with groups in my riding over the past few months and discussed with them the concerns they had over the possible consequences of the imposition of current value assessment in their businesses. I heard from them that in particular cases it could result in unreasonably high tax increases on certain storefront businesses and on other businesses.

My colleagues throughout Toronto met with their local businesses and heard the same message. We met with the minister; we met with the Premier. We brought those concerns to the minister and to the Premier and we got quick results in the form of the bill that we are debating here this evening.

We knew that the education taxes on Toronto businesses have historically been higher than elsewhere in the province. This government has moved to correct that first by taking control of education finance away from the school boards, where the education taxes were spiralling throughout the province, but in Toronto more than anywhere else. The province took control of the education tax and now in this bill has started the process of bringing Toronto's commercial-industrial education tax down, where it will equalize the rest of the province.

The Speaker: Response, member for Cochrane South.

Mr Bisson: I want to thank all the members for their comments. Specifically to the member for York East, you say it's a question that the opposition can't take yes for an answer. It has nothing to do with us not wanting to take yes for an answer. This bill has everything to do with the fact that you are now fixing mistakes that you created when you did previous bills that dealt with municipal assessment, pure and simple. That's what we're pointing out.

The role of the opposition is to tell the government where they've done wrong and where they've done right, and in this particular case you did wrong. You made a mistake. You wouldn't listen to the ministry people when you drafted the legislation; you wouldn't listen to the people when they made submissions. You only found out that you had a problem when people came back and showed their actual tax bills and said, "Hey, we've got a real problem." Then you decided to do something about it.

It's not a question of not taking yes for an answer; it's a question of fixing your problem. But don't believe me. I'm just one member of the opposition. Believe the students from Frank P. Krznaric school, who came here earlier today. When they found out that we'd be debating this bill and I told them what it was all about, they said, "People in our society, in the society of Ontario, deserve better." They deserve better from a government that in this particular case is always picking on those people who are less fortunate and less able to get for themselves in society what others who are more fortunate are able to get. They deserve a government that says to young students at Frank P. Krznaric school, looking forward to college or university later, that they should be able to look forward to having good tuition fees that are affordable and are not

climbing and going through the roof. They're worried that when they get to college and university, because of the decisions this government makes, tuition will be unaffordable and many of them will not be able to go on to some of the professions they would like to.

The other thing the students from Frank P. Krznaric told me today was, and I thought it was very telling because it's in keeping with this bill, "This is a government that is always picking on the middle class." That's exactly what's happening in this bill, because what you're doing by way of this bill is transferring a tax burden on to the residential property owners.

1800

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. The member for Cochrane South has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given Tuesday by the Attorney General on Bill 108. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) : L'autre jour, le 12 mai, j'ai posé une question au procureur général qui était très claire. J'ai dit que présentement dans la province de l'Ontario, si une personne est accusée d'une offense provinciale, elle a le droit d'avoir des services en français dans les cours. C'est garanti, le procès, et le procureur de la cour assigné doit être capable de parler français pour donner l'information à la personne qui est en cour pour qu'elle puisse comprendre et avoir une cour qui est juste.

J'ai demandé, avec l'amendement que le gouvernement a mis en avant, l'amendement qu'ils nous ont donné à la Loi 108, si le même droit va être garanti une fois que l'amendement et le projet de loi seront acceptés.

Le procureur général m'a répondu, «Oui.»

Moi, j'ai dit — écoutez, c'est intéressant : «J'ai ici une décision du bureau des conseils législatifs datée le 12 mai où ils disent, et je veux la lire exactement comme c'est écrit dans la lettre, l'opinion que j'ai reçue :

"Failure to provide a bilingual prosecutor in accordance with an agreement might not invalidate a proceeding in every case, but it would invalidate a proceeding if the failure resulted in prejudice to the defendant's right to a fair hearing.

"This issue of whether the right to a fair hearing was prejudiced would depend on the particular circumstance of the case." C'est ceci qui est intéressant : "It might be relevant, for example, whether a French-speaking defendant was also fluent in English. It might also be relevant that in a province like Ontario, with residents who speak many different languages, it is not unusual for a defendant

to be prosecuted by a prosecutor who does not speak the defendant's language."

Quand on voit cette opinion-là, le monde dans la communauté francophone se demande des questions. La question est très simple : Pourquoi est-ce que le gouvernement refuse d'accepter un amendement qui est clair et qui dit qu'un francophone, une fois qu'il se trouve dans une cour municipale, va avoir les mêmes protections sous la loi qu'il aurait dans une cour provinciale ?

La question est très simple. Le gouvernement essaie de patiner et de nous dire : «Écoutez. Ayez confiance en nous. On va vous donner cette garantie.» Mais j'ai eu la chance de parler à l'Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario. Je leur ai envoyé cette décision et j'ai dit : «Donnez-moi votre opinion sur ce que ça veut dire. Regardez et dites-le-moi.»

Ils disent dans leur lettre : «Il est essentiel que les trois dernières phrases» de la personne qui écrit l'avis «soient clarifiées avant le vote sur l'amendement du gouvernement.» Même l'Association des juristes, qui a négocié cette entente, a des «concerns» faisant affaire avec l'amendement que vous avez fait.

Ma question est très simple : Est-ce que les francophones de la province de l'Ontario vont avoir les mêmes garanties qu'ils ont présentement sous la loi, une fois que les services juridiques seront transférés aux municipalités de l'Ontario ? La réponse, est-elle oui, et comment ?

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): The member for Cochrane South has registered his dissatisfaction with the government's proposed amendment to Bill 108 and with the Attorney General's response a couple of days ago to the question of protecting French language rights in relation to the transfer of the Provincial Offences Act services to municipalities.

We are confident that our proposed amendment to our legislation and our memorandum of understanding protect French linguistic rights. The Courts of Justice Act guarantees trials in French. Even after the transfer of the POA it will continue to apply to all areas of the province.

We have set out in the memorandum of understanding all provincial principles of justice and standards of services that municipalities will be required to maintain when they take on POA responsibilities. That includes current provincial standards of services in French. Any municipal partner that takes on POA responsibilities will first need to demonstrate their ability to meet provincial standards.

Bill 108 authorizes the Attorney General to actively monitor municipal performance, order compliance with

standards and impose standards where standards are not met. Bill 108 authorizes the Attorney General to set up a review committee to assist with monitoring performance and resolving disputes and to recommend sanctions if necessary.

Both AJEFO and AFMO, as well as other key stakeholders in the transfer, have agreed to participate in the review committee. These associations have also expressed their willingness to provide support to those municipalities with fewer bilingual resources.

Also the l'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario has noted in a recent communiqué that "It is quite encouraging to note that linguistic rights and basic principles of law will be preserved" as part of the proposed transfer of the POA responsibilities.

The amendment reinforces the right to a fair hearing and clarifies the intention of the section. The intent of that section is to prevent court proceedings from being invalidated solely on the basis of technicalities.

I quote from a recent letter from the president of AJEFO to the Attorney General regarding the text of the proposed amendments to Bill 108 and the memorandum of understanding:

"I would like to thank you for the successful result we have achieved. By protecting existing language rights in this way as part of the transfer to Ontario municipalities of prosecution responsibilities with respect to certain provincial offences and certain federal contraventions, you are the first government to clearly specify the right to a French-speaking municipal prosecutor. I am also pleased that the wording used will ensure the delivery of counter services in French.

"Finally, I would like to thank you for your personal intervention in this matter and for your suggestions which allowed us to protect language rights, which are so important to our Canadian identity. I am very happy that we were able to work together to amend this bill in so positive a manner."

AFMO has also written in support of Bill 108, stating that by participating in the review committee, "both associations can ensure that current services in French will be maintained."

I am confident that this reply satisfies the question of the member for Cochrane South.

The Speaker: It now being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned till 1:30 of the clock May 25.

The House adjourned at 1809.

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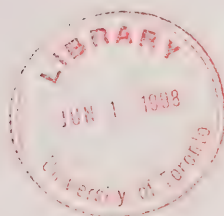
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Monday 25 May 1998

Lundi 25 mai 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 mai 1998

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

ESTIMATES

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I have a message from the Administrator of the government.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): The Administrator of the government transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the year ending 31 March 1999, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I want to continue to pursue the urgent issue of mental health services in Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario, or more accurately the increasingly critical lack of mental health services.

Individuals in Thunder Bay who suffer from mental illness are not able to get the care they need when it is needed. They have to wait for a hospital bed, for outpatient services and for any kind of community support. There are not enough psychiatrists to treat acutely ill patients and not enough community services to keep these individuals functioning outside the hospital setting. The situation is getting worse because of the uncertainty about mental health planning.

The Minister of Health has said there will be no further closure of psychiatric beds in this province until community supports are in place, but the date for closing the Lakehead Psychiatric Hospital less than a year from now has not been changed.

There can be no planning for community support services, because the mental health agency that was supposed to be making these plans has never been established. The health restructuring commission, which recommended that the agency be set up, still seems to think it's a good idea, but nothing has been done about it. No plans are being made to provide outpatient services for the 1,300 outpatients that the psychiatric hospital treats every year. No one knows what will happen to the rehabilitation programs

that have made an independent life a possibility for many former patients of the hospital.

This is what happens when health care planning and restructuring is all based on theoretical abstraction and the application of arbitrary formulae: The people who need the care simply aren't part of the equation. The reality and the immediacy of their needs just doesn't fit neatly into the planning framework.

Tonight, a group of concerned individuals were to meet to discuss what should be done. I hope the government will listen.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): For the first time in its 107-year history, the editorial staff at the St Catharines Standard have been forced on to the streets in a strike action. It should come as no surprise, in view of the fact that their new corporate owners are led and owned and controlled by none other than Conrad Black, who has no regard for workers' rights, for their welfare and quite frankly for editorial integrity.

These 31 editorial employees have been forced into a strike position. They have engaged in lengthy negotiations with no response from Tubby Black and his gang operating the Standard in St Catharines.

I tell you this: I urge all of those residents of Niagara region, in particular St Catharines, to make it clear to Conrad Black and his bunch that they're not going to tolerate this type of treatment of working people, those trained, skilled, competent staff at the St Catharines Standard. We in Niagara region will not be purchasing the St Catharines Standard.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Oh, if you want to take a look at the obits, go down to the corner store, open the paper, read the obits and put it back where you got it from.

The Independent, a weekly newspaper being published by these same workers, is going to be distributed for free come this weekend, May 30 and 31, and weekly thereafter. I urge people to rely on that for their news, sports and editorial comments.

MISSING CHILDREN

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): Today, May 25, is National Missing Children's Day. I would like to share with the House some important information about Child Find Ontario and its Green Ribbon of Hope campaign.

The idea of wearing a green ribbon as a symbol of hope for missing children began at Holy Cross Secondary School in St Catharines after the tragic disappearance and murder of Kristen French. The campaign continues today so that we can be reminded of the plight of missing children in Ontario and Canada.

RCMP statistics show that each year more than 50,000 children are listed as missing. This is an alarming statistic. Happily, however, with the support of the community, law enforcement officers, customs and immigration officials, more than 90% of these children are successfully recovered. But still about 5,000 children remain missing in this country each year. As a legislator and a parent of five children, this is indeed a serious issue that must be addressed. The Green Ribbon of Hope causes us to reflect today on the missing, runaway and kidnapped children.

One of my local constituents, Gord Levis, is chairperson of Durham Child Find, based in Ajax. This chapter has been in operation since 1994 and during that time has done valuable work assisting in finding children who have been lost. Durham Child Find is hosting an event this weekend on Saturday, May 30, with a fingerprinting program to be held at the Bowmanville police station from 10 am to 2 pm. I would encourage parents and all people to support Child Find in Ontario.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): The member for Durham East is wearing a ribbon. You haven't received unanimous consent to do so.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I request unanimous consent for the wearing of the Green Ribbon of Hope in honour of National Missing Children's Day.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed? Agreed.

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): My statement is directed at the Premier and the Minister of Health. After three flip-flops, now you both claim unqualified support for hepatitis C victims, at least to the press. You make media statements demanding immediate action to ease the burden of sufferers. What a grandstand performance. You have done nothing to help them. You have not even contacted the hepatitis C society. They know how you can help victims by removing provincial roadblocks and bureaucratic red tape. You're not interested. You prefer instead to stage-manage a kinder, gentler public image. You're not fooling anyone, Premier; not the hepatitis C society, not the public and certainly not the victims.

My young constituent Trisha Beadle is newly married, but her future is being threatened by hepatitis C. She needs the drug interferon, but OHIP won't pay for it. Cut the hypocrisy, Premier. Put your money where your mouth is. You have a chance to make life easier for Trisha and many other victims immediately. Do it today. Make OHIP

responsible for interferon and other drugs for victims. Justice demands it; justice demands it now.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I rise to point out to the House that the new Ministry of Education so-called funding formula, which is really a cutting formula, which will mean a 7.8% cut to the Algoma District School Board over three years, doesn't take into account additional costs that these boards are incurring. The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board is planning to increase administrative charges to schedule 2 employers, of which this board is one, after the amalgamation. The increase is from 14.5% to 19.5%. This represents an increase of about 34%, which will add directly to the cost of employee benefits at a time the ministry is reducing funding to school boards.

Also, Algoma District School Board — district school board 2 — is the largest geographic board in Ontario. It covers approximately 72,000 square kilometres or approximately two thirds the area of southern Ontario. This has not been recognized in the cutting formula, and as a result there are additional costs required for trustees to travel to Sault Ste Marie, a central location, for meetings. The limit of \$5,000 per trustee for travelling expenses doesn't cover it. Right now the board is having to pay approximately \$1,400 for trustees from Wawa, Elliot Lake and Bruce Mines to attend meetings each month. This is going to run out very quickly. Why is the government —

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Thank you. Before we continue, could I ask the House to come to order, please. Take your meetings outside. Further statements, the member for Halton Centre.

1340

LIQUOR CONTROL

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): There is a newly popular kind of alcoholic beverage appealing to young people who don't normally consume hard liquor. It masks the bitter taste of alcohol and packs a nasty wallop. They are called coolers and they come in a range of flavours — most of them sweet, fruity and carbonated; basically soda pop — some containing 6.9% alcohol, almost double that of light beer. Having consumed two or three of these quickly, our youth are left staggering drunk.

Coolers are insidiously marketed with names that evoke sexual undertones and images of wild times — the Original Stiff, Mike's Hard Lemonade, Spiked Cherry, UFO and Kaos — and at \$2 each they're inexpensive and can fit in a purse or pocket easily.

Another risk is Frozen Dream, a drink disguised as a milk shake that contains 12.5% alcohol, the same as wine. One tall glass could render a young person a dangerous driver or a young girl vulnerable to date rape.

The LCBO manages an excellent program called SMAART — strategies for managing age and alcohol-related trouble. It's designed to prevent those who are

under age from purchasing alcohol and it works quite well most of the time.

But there are still some adults who insist on purchasing booze for minors, potentially putting lives in danger. To these people, on behalf of parents, I ask: Stop facilitating under-age drinking. To the manufacturers of coolers, I ask that you think twice about the young demographic group your products are reaching and that you practise responsible marketing.

With summer break around the corner, parents must be on the lookout for bush parties, along with drinking and driving, alcohol-related accidents, alcohol poisoning and date rape. Awareness is the key to preventing these perils.

MISSING CHILDREN

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): Today, May 25, is the seventh annual Green Ribbon of Hope campaign, this day being the National Missing Children's Day across this country. This coincides with Child Find Ontario's Green Ribbon of Hope campaign that highlights the plight of missing, runaway, lost, kidnapped and abducted children in Ontario and Canada.

I think it's very important that members of this Legislature make sure that the public is aware of this day and also what Child Find Ontario accomplishes through their various 25 chapters across this province involving 1,100 volunteers across Ontario.

Every day they work with everyone involved in the search for a missing child — parents, law enforcement agencies, lawyers and government agencies — quickly producing and distributing posters with photographs of missing children and getting those distributed right across the province; alerting the public through TV and other media of missing children; and providing emotional support to the parents. They operate a 24-hour toll-free national telephone line to collect tips and reports on missing children.

They undertake preventive measures by providing education on child safety to parents and children and by sponsoring programs like the Kidcheck fingerprinting program and All About Me, the baby ID footprinting program for infants. All these Child Find programs are free of charge and are supported by donations and volunteers.

AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): On Wednesday, May 13, Sudbury regional council passed a resolution calling on the Minister of Health to review ambulance response times to ensure that these are equitable and the most efficient they can be throughout the region.

This follows on the heels of a near tragedy that occurred in my home town of Capreol three weeks ago. At 10 in the morning, 20-month-old Travis Trim had a seizure and was pulled out of his crib by his parents, gasping for air and turning blue. His father sought help from the neighbour, Julie Dinsmore, who is a registered nurse. A call for help was also made to 911. Ministry of

Health records then show that an ambulance was dispatched from the main Sudbury station versus the substation in Hanmer, which is much closer to our community of Capreol. The ambulance in the substation was on its way to Sudbury as a result of an earlier call. There was no other vehicle in the substation as a backup.

Our first response team was called but they were delayed 15 minutes by a train. An ambulance supervisor was dispatched from the airport to act as a first responder, but he arrived only one minute before our first response team. It took 18 minutes for the ambulance to arrive from Sudbury. In that time Travis Trim had another seizure. Had it not been for Julie Dinsmore carrying out CPR, this child would have died.

The Minister of Health must review what happened here. Important questions need to be answered, including why the air ambulance was not dispatched and why it's not ministry policy to replace an ambulance in a substation when the regular vehicle is off on call. This could have been a tragedy. It has to be avoided in the future.

JUNIOR HOCKEY

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): Hockey is Canada's game and junior hockey is a proud tradition in Ontario and in my riding of Guelph. It's my pleasure to rise today to recognize the Guelph Storm Junior A hockey team as the 1998 Ontario Hockey League champions.

Junior hockey is often described as the purest form of the sport because these young men play with such enthusiasm and intensity. Many representatives here in this House have OHL teams in their communities, such as the Kitchener Rangers or the North Bay Centennials.

Guelph Storm played well all year, never falling below second place and finishing first in the central division three out of the last four years. Coached by George Burnett and Rick Allain, this team of talented players proudly represented Ontario at the Memorial Cup at the Canadian Hockey League championships recently held in Spokane, Washington. They battled their way to the final game, where the Portland Winter Hawks defeated them in overtime, winning the Memorial Cup.

The people of my city have been thrilled by the performance of the Guelph Storm all year. This team brings excitement and pride to our city. It's an honour for me to congratulate general manager Alan Millar, the coaches, the management, the billets, the sponsors, and most of all the players — Guelph Storm, the 1998 Ontario Hockey League champions.

VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): I would like to inform members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today councillors from Prince Edward county led by His Worship Mayor James Taylor. Please join me in welcoming our guests.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RED TAPE REDUCTION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 VISANT À RÉDUIRE
LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES

Mr Tsubouchi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 25, An Act to reduce red tape by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts / *Projet de loi 25, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives en modifiant ou abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant deux nouvelles lois.*

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Minister, would you like to make a brief statement?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): To be very brief, this is merely a reintroduction of several matters that appeared before us and were tabled during the last session. I will take the opportunity, though, to congratulate Frank Sheehan and his Red Tape Commission in terms of the good work they've done to reduce red tape in this province that will go on to create jobs and bolster the economy in this province.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Response.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for St Catharines, you would know that there are no responses to this.

1350

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding standing order 95(d), Mr Patten, Mr Conway and Ms Castrilli exchange places in the order of precedence for private members' public business such that Mr Patten assumes ballot item 33, Mr Conway assumes ballot item 64 and Ms Castrilli assumes ballot item 45.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm on May 25, 26 and 27, 1998, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): No.

The Deputy Speaker: I hear a "no."

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TUITION FEES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, Queen's University students are here today to tell you how concerned they are about skyrocketing tuition fees and unmanageable student debt loads. They say that you've broken a promise you made to keep tuition costs at 25% of the total cost of a student's education. We know that you've removed all limits on how high tuition can go in graduate programs and many professional programs, but even in undergraduate programs where you sanction the fee increases, tuition is going up by 60% under your watch. That means that students will be paying 35% of the costs of education, and in some places students will be paying 50% of the costs of their education, a far cry from the 25% that you said was a fair share.

Minister, the World Bank, in 1994, recommended that students in publicly funded universities should not be charged fees exceeding 30% of the costs of their education. You used to say that a fair share was 25%. What do you now say is a fair share for students to pay?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): This government is looking at a number of issues pertaining to post-secondary, and one of the issues is accessibility. We feel that students coming out of the secondary institutions in the province of Ontario should all have the opportunity for post-secondary education if they have the ability and if they have the interest. I have been assured by the council of universities that indeed that will be the case, that every one of our students who is interested and has the ability at a post-secondary institution will be given the right to have that education.

Second, then we will look at the funding. What sort of assistance is required by our students at post-secondary institutions?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for Ottawa West, come to order.

Hon David Johnson: That may be in the form of a grant or a loan —

The Deputy Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: The province of Ontario has contributed over \$500 million a year, plus various other loans that I'll address in the supplementary.

Mrs McLeod: So you aren't prepared to answer the question about what you think a fair share for students is.

Prior to the election campaign you were prepared to talk about a fair share, at least your government and your now Premier were, but now you won't even answer the question because the fact is that your idea of a fair share is whatever the universities think they can get away with charging. You're trying to avoid any responsibility at all for making sure that students pay only a fair share, because fairness for students just isn't part of your agenda.

I suggest to you, Minister, that student debt isn't something that you worry very much about either. You

have allowed the student debt load to grow each year. Graduates are now less and less able to make payments because of the size of the debts they're graduating with. I have a freedom of information request, Minister, that tells me that the default rate on Ontario student loans is up to 23.5% this year from 18.6% last year. This isn't because of an unwillingness to pay; it's because graduates can't manage the debt they have now.

Surely, Minister, you realize that increases in tuition and the increasing debt that you have already allowed are crippling our graduates. I ask you how you can be comfortable with the fact that young graduates cannot get out from under the debt load they are facing, and in conscience I ask you, how can you let this get worse?

Hon David Johnson: During the term of government of the Liberal Party from 1985 to 1990, tuition fees in fact did increase by some 35% in the province of Ontario. For that there was no additional assistance to the students. That was something they had to bear themselves.

We have said that no tuition will be increased unless, first of all, there is 30% set aside to assist all students who need assistance at the post-secondary level. That will involve tens of millions of dollars over the next year. We have said that no student will be denied access to our post-secondary institutions. If the universities and the colleges decide to put the tuition fees up — and that's a decision they'll have to make — no student will be denied an opportunity of post-secondary education in the province of Ontario.

Mrs McLeod: Please deal with the facts that students are facing: You made a decision that students could have a debt load of \$7,000 a year. That was a decision your government made that increased the debt load. You are now saying with deregulation that this debt load can go up by even greater amounts as long as the university or college is prepared to loan the students the difference, so their debt load can go up by whatever amount the universities and colleges feel is bearable. The problem is clearly going to get worse.

Minister, there is only one other province, Nova Scotia, where they have deregulated tuition fees. That province is the only province that has higher tuition fees than Ontario, and very quickly now under deregulation Ontario will have the dubious distinction of having the highest tuition fees in the country. Nova Scotia has also tried your proposed approach to the debt problem: They brought in an income-contingent repayment plan. But guess what? The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce is no longer part of the plan. They found that tuition increases and high debt loads made students very bad risks —

The Deputy Speaker: Question, please.

Mrs McLeod: — so they withdrew from participating. The banks have given you the same message here: They won't be part of your plan because student debt load is too high.

My question to you today is to say that the only responsible way to deal with student debt is to start with a tuition freeze so that you can give answers to the questions about what is a fair share —

The Deputy Speaker: Minister?

Hon David Johnson: The decisions we made with regard to post-secondary education are, number one, for quality. If any institution determines that it needs to put the tuition fees up, then it must come hand in hand with an increase in quality, in the level of education in that particular institution, quality enhancements in the programs for students.

Secondly, the decisions we made are for increased opportunities in terms of more spots in the universities and colleges for students who want to go through various programs but are being denied today. We've said students no longer should be denied; they should have that opportunity.

Finally, it's in terms of assistance to our post-secondary students so that they will be assured accessibility to a high-quality education: \$600 million over three years that the province of Ontario is putting in; a \$600-million opportunity trust fund to assist those students who need help; and 30% set aside, if post-secondary institutions put the tuition fees up, to ensure that each and every student gets the education they deserve in the province of Ontario.

MEDICAL LABORATORIES

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): My question is for the Premier. Today, Maclean's magazine exposed yet another of your health care messes. In January, you passed a regulation that changed how privately funded laboratories in this province are paid. What you did was put a cap on individual labs where there used to be one for the industry, and what you did in the same breath was take money away that had been earned in the last two years from small labs and give it to their competitors. This is not only a suspect use of government power, Premier, but it turns out to be anti-competitive and harmful to the health of Ontarians.

Mr Harris, the affected labs, including this one, Alfa Laboratories, which you commended for expanding their business in 1996 and sent this nifty little certificate to, are now facing going out of business because of this bizarre regulation you've passed. Why would you pass a regulation that would take \$5 million in fees earned already over the last two years from a number of laboratories and give it to other labs that are their competitors? Why would you do that?

1400

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Minister of Health can answer.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Referring to the cap and the regulation, since an application for a judicial review of this regulation has been filed, it would be inappropriate for me to comment further at this time.

Mr Kennedy: Ontarians deserve some answers, and I think the minister who is responsible for making sure that patients get services has to answer some of the questions here today. Not only are you putting labs out of business, you're hurting patients. You know that right now there are

problems in many communities. For example, we have letters from Dr Cross and Dr Wilson that say 7,000 patients in Waterdown will be without lab services. This is going to be a significant hardship for seniors in that community.

The question is, why, when the competition bureau of Industry Canada told you specifically that your proposal, your cap, would constitute a violation of the conspiracy provisions of the Competition Act, would you override protection for patients?

Maclean's magazine indicates that the principals of one of the companies that is benefiting has made \$41,100 in donations to your party since 1995, 10 times the amount to any other party. Will you at least answer today, why are you giving Ontarians discount health care, and for whose benefit are you working, anyway?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think it's important to understand that the Ministry of Health has always negotiated and discussed any issues related to lab issues with the Ontario Association of Medical Laboratories. This has been going on since 1970. All previous governments, in any discussions that dealt with issues related to labs, have always dealt with the umbrella group, the Ontario Association of Medical Laboratories.

It's also important to know that other governments have always known there are systemic problems associated with Ontario's public and private sector labs as well. In fact, it was the NDP government that first issued some very formal recommendations on changes that should be made to the laboratory system in Ontario, and they actually did bring in some industry caps on lab billings because they realized they could not go unchecked.

However, talking about access to lab services, I want to stress that if there are any situations where there is a change in accessibility, the Ministry of Health is working to ensure that existing services will be provided.

Mr Kennedy: The minister doesn't tell us that she and her ministry were advised, beginning in July 1997, that consumers would be affected by this. She's had letters from doctors telling her exactly the same thing I've raised in the House today. Maybe what those doctors didn't know was that the labs of Ontario, part of the OAML, voted against this proposal 14 to 10 but you imposed it anyway.

You'll put these small labs out of business. Dr Fiorini of Toronto, who has 28 years with one of the firms, Gamma Dynacare, says that as a physician he is simply not equipped with sufficient expertise to obtain timely and relevant tests for his patients, which is an absolute necessity in family practice. He says patient care will suffer. It's like going back in time prior to 1970.

Dr Fiorini and 130 other doctors like him have been dumped by the labs which stand to benefit from this arrangement and they've been picked up by the very labs which you now want to close down. This goes into effect next month. You've put other parts of the health system into chaos — hospitals and home care. Next month there will be patients who won't have access to tests.

It's your regulation. What are you going to do about it?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think it's important that we remember that the ministry is working with the Ontario Association of Medical Laboratories. They are the group with which the Ministry of Health has always worked when it comes to any issue related to labs. It's the group with which the Liberal government worked when you were in power for five years and the group with which the NDP worked. We are going to continue to work with them in order that we can prepare for the implementation of the provision of the corporate tax regulation, and we are also going to ensure that we protect the access to lab services in this province.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Premier, and the question is this: You have been very successful in cutting \$800 million out of hospital budgets; you have been very successful in cutting a lot of money out of school budgets, out of colleges and universities. Can you explain how, while you're cutting hospitals and schools, colleges and universities, you found the room to increase your own cabinet office budget by 50% this year?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): First of all, with regard to the preamble, our goal of course is to improve the quality of health care and improve the quality of the education system by taking any waste in bureaucracy — non-classroom spending, for example — and get it into the classroom, any waste in bureaucracy and get it directed to patients in health care.

With regard to the two offices for which estimates are out today, first of all, the Premier's office, I think you'll find a decrease when you compare apples to apples, down a little over 2.3% year over year. In the cabinet office, when you compare apples to apples, it's down as well. However, included in the cabinet office now is the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board and the process for consultation that we undertook with my parliamentary assistant for referendums. But certainly when you compare apples to apples, you'll find our spending down quite significantly.

Mr Hampton: If this weren't so sad, it would be laughable. The Premier describes 10,000 nurses going out of hospitals and nursing homes as getting rid of waste and inefficiency. He describes schools being closed and colleges and universities being underfunded as getting rid of waste and inefficiency. But in his own office, in his cabinet office, when he increases the budget by \$4 million this year over last year, he calls it a wonderful thing.

It's very clear from the estimates that it's your good friend, your buddy David Lindsay, your political adviser, who is heading up the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board. It is your good friend, your buddy, who is getting the money. Hospitals are losing, schools are losing, colleges and universities are losing, but your good friend David Lindsay gets a plum job and a \$4-million budget. Can you explain how that is?

Hon Mr Harris: I would be surprised that you would not be 100% supportive of the Ontario Jobs and Invest-

ment Board. We have used it to replace the NDP Premier's councils, which in 1991 alone spent \$7.6 million, double the budget in the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board. I am sure you would want to look at the job creation record when in almost five years in office your administration and all your Premier's councils spending led to net 10,000 fewer jobs in the province. That's your legacy and that's your record.

I would think you would want to say to David Lindsay and to this government: "Thank you very much for record job creation. Keep that Ontario Jobs and Investment Board going."

Mr Hampton: Premier, it's the people of Ontario who want to know something. They want to know where the money for their hospitals is going. They want to know where the money for their children's schools is going. They want to know why their children will be paying \$3,000, \$4,000 and \$5,000 tuition increases. Meanwhile, you've got \$4 million to spend on David Lindsay and this political propaganda that he's putting out. You've got no problem finding money for political propaganda but you can't find money for hospitals, for education, for colleges and universities.

Answer to the people of Ontario why your government can find money for this disgusting political propaganda but you can't find money for health care, education and for people who need help.

1410

Hon Mr Harris: It is exactly because we cut your former spending in this area on the Premier's councils in half that we've been able, in the last budget, to make announcements like \$546 million more in the health budget, which I think will lead to some 7,400 new nursing jobs in Ontario. It's because of the efficiencies and savings and a whole host of the budgets that we took over from your government that we're able to put so much more money into post-secondary training, so much more money into children and schools, \$200 million more in education this year, \$150 million more into Canadian safety, \$175 million more into roads.

It is because we have precisely, through the leadership of people like David Lindsay, who, yes, is a friend; that's fine. Robin Sears is a friend of mine, good gosh. But I want to tell you this: It is through finding savings —

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Order, please. Premier, take your seat.

Hon Mr Harris: — by the former Premier that we're able to put money into these other areas.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My next question is also for the Premier, and let me paraphrase his answer. You're cutting hospitals, you're cutting health care in order to fund your phoney tax scheme and provide money for your corporate friends. That is the essence of my next question.

We find out over the weekend that not only do your friends advise you on how to set up casinos, but after they advise you, they then go over to the other side and they actually head up the operation of the company that wins the casino bid.

For example, you had after the last election someone named Andrzej Kepinski advise you on how to set up casinos across the province. Surprisingly, he is one of the people who's behind the company that has now won the right to operate the Niagara casino. Then Michael French is someone who advised you on how to set up casinos but, not surprisingly, now he is behind the Niagara casino. We could go on.

I want to ask you: Doesn't it strike you as odd, Premier, that your same political friends who advised you on how to set up casinos are now on the other side of the table, running these casinos, and are going to benefit to the tune of millions of dollars from the operation of those casinos? Doesn't that strike you as a bit odd?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Chair of Management Board can answer that. I've never heard of these people.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): The process, as the member is well aware, went through David Nash, the president of the Ontario Casino Corp. It's an arm's-length process from the government. It had an internal review and I'm told there's nothing inappropriate about that and that it can stand up to scrutiny.

There have been allegations and there have been rumours and there has been innuendo, but I don't think that's new to governments or to industry. But the facts are that there was an independent process. David Nash went through the proper process.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): I can't hear the answer. Minister, are you finished? Okay, supplementary.

Mr Hampton: The minister introduced David Nash into this. The public needs to know who David Nash is. David Nash was a fund-raiser for Dianne Cunningham, who sits in the Conservative cabinet. He was a fund-raiser for someone who sat in the Mulroney cabinet: Tom Hockin. In fact, he was Tom Hockin's chief of staff.

We have a Conservative political hack deciding that casino operations are going to go to other Conservative political hacks, because it's very clear that Michael French was involved in telling your government how to set up casinos. Now he's involved on the other side in getting the casino franchise

Hon Mr Harris: Never heard of him.

Mr Hampton: Andrzej Kepinski was involved in advising your government on how to set up casinos; now he's on the other side and he's going to benefit from the operation of this.

Hon Mr Harris: Never heard of him.

Mr Hampton: Premier, since you seem to want to comment now, can you explain to us, how is the public

interest going to be served when Conservative hacks are advising you how to set up casinos, Conservative hacks are going to benefit from operating those casinos —

The Deputy Speaker: Question, please.

Mr Hampton: — and Conservative hacks are going to make the decisions that other Conservative hacks get to operate the casinos? How is the public interest going to be protected in any way in that kind of process?

Hon Mr Hodgson: It's always interesting when you just want to sling mud and have personal character assassination.

I can tell you this: David Nash went through the proper procedure. He went through the select committee of this Legislature and the Liberals voted for him, feeling confident that he would deliver in a fair and consistent manner. So I don't know where you get off personally attacking people like that. He went through the proper process. The Liberals even voted for him in that process.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The minister is imputing false and unwarranted motives to another member, namely, those members of the government agencies committee, and I would ask him to withdraw those statements.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. Second supplementary.

Mr Hampton: I want to be clear. I have not damaged Mr Nash's reputation in any way. He is clearly a Conservative political hack. That's what he is. He self-identifies that way.

My point is this: You've got Conservative advisers telling you how to set up casinos. You've got Conservative advisers selecting who gets the casino, and then if you look at who gets the casino, it's the same Conservative advisers who advised the government in the first place.

I want to ask you about something else. I want to ask you about the Latner family. Now, the Latner family owns companies like Greenwin and Dynacare and they donated \$48,000 to the Conservative Party in the last election campaign. They also are part of the Falls Management casino bid. They own about 20% of Falls Management casino. George Boddington, who is a lobbyist for Falls Management casino, is also a lobbyist for Greenwin and Dynacare, the company that gave you \$48,000 in the last election.

David McFadden, who advised Falls Management, is another Conservative insider.

The Deputy Speaker: Question, please.

Mr Hampton: With all these Conservative insiders helping other Conservative insiders to the trough, don't you think it's time you opened the books and let the people of Ontario see exactly what's happening here?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The leader of the third party makes a lot of allegations. There have been no contracts made between the bidders and Brian Wood, the president of the Ontario Casino Corp. The Falls Management company was selected because in the opinion of the selection committee it had the highest-quality bid. That's been stated by the president, Brian Wood. If he wants to make these

kinds of spurious allegations, I invite him to do so outside the Legislature.

1420

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health. I'm speaking to you on behalf of the thousands of people out there in the local communities who are faced with a hospital being shut down by your hospital destruction commission, but you won't take responsibility for it. Today it was individuals from the community of Northumberland county who came here to find out if this government could be made to listen that their commission had got it fundamentally wrong, or in the words of Dr John Aldis, who lives in Northumberland and helped to invent medicare in Ontario, the preposterous decision they made in terms of the assessment they made in Northumberland county. They even got the number of beds in the hospital wrong.

What the people of Port Hope, of Cobourg, of Northumberland county want to hear from you is, will you be listening to them when it's proven that their needs are different from what the commission concludes? Will you listen to them and make sure they get quality health care?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Certainly we are aware of the fact that health and hospital services and all health services are very, very important to people in Ontario. Of course the Health Services Restructuring Commission made its interim report, and the community that was here today has had an opportunity to make a response. They've been able to provide information that is now being considered by the commission. At the end of the day, I'm very confident that the commission will make a response. The people will have had an opportunity to provide the input, and we will have, as a result of the recommendations, excellent health services being provided.

Mr Kennedy: I think the people of Port Hope have one benefit going for them. It's not that the member for Northumberland is making anything happen for them and it's not that you're listening; instead, it's that they are further along in the process. They've seen what the people of Thunder Bay have done by standing up, they've seen that in Kitchener-Waterloo some different formulas were applied, and they perhaps understand that you're responsible for this process; in the final analysis, you have the power to change these decisions. It's your job to look after health care, not some phoney-baloney commission that only answers appeals to itself.

Minister, will you assure the residents of Northumberland county that you will stop the cuts that are taking place to their hospital corporation and give them the time to work out a local solution as to what the best health facilities are to serve their area? You know it's the \$10 million you've taken away and the \$5 million more you want to cut that are causing this chaos. Will you at least guarantee the citizens of Northumberland that your political agenda to close hospitals way in advance of the

election won't get in the way of their health care? Will you restore some of the cuts and allow them to make a decision that's good for the people of Northumberland?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think it's important to remember that what we are endeavouring to do is to deal with the neglect of years and years and a health system that wasn't responding to the needs of people in Ontario.

So the Health Services Restructuring Commission is going to communities, it is taking a look at what the needs of communities are, it is making interim recommendations, it is listening to people, after people have an opportunity to review the interim recommendations, and then it's issuing final recommendations.

What we are seeing is needs being addressed. We're seeing, for example, a new long-term-care system being set up in the province. We're seeing community care enhanced. Recently, we made a \$1.2-billion announcement. We're also seeing new investments into priority services — cardiac care, cancer care, dialysis, hip and knee — and we're seeing new investments into primary care. As a result of the initiatives our government is undertaking, we are developing a better health system that is going to be responsive to the needs of all people, not only today, but it's going to provide the health services that take us into the 21st century.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I have a question to the Chair of Management Board. For years, your experts and experts of previous governments and experts in the Niagara region understood that the development of tourism was crucial to the economic future of the Niagara region, and one of the critical elements was a major convention centre. Falls Management, laden with your and your Premier's friends, was the successful bidder. Falls Management's proposal does not contain any substantial convention facility. That's in contrast to Fallsview, a bidder who proposed a convention facility nine times the size of that contained in the Falls Management proposal.

Your abandonment of a convention centre has betrayed the people of Niagara Falls and Niagara region and has sold out the prospect of tourism in favour of the profits going to the private sector and to government coffers from casino gambling. How could you let that happen?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): The original Gateway RFP was changed from just a tourism proposal request to include the permanent casino site. The reason why? Because under the NDP plan there was very little interest generated before the casino site was added to the proposal. The new RFP called for the same tourism initiative as the original, first-class, year-round attractions that will make Niagara region a tourism destination of first choice for the 21st century. That's exactly the same. That was not changed.

We have not abandoned the tourism initiative; in fact we want to enhance it and expand upon it. Just two weeks

ago I met with the mayor and the business improvement area of Niagara Falls. This government is very committed to seeing that tourism is enhanced and expanded upon, and that's what we're doing.

Mr Kormos: The problem is that the mayor of Niagara Falls doesn't agree with you. The mayor of Niagara Falls has expressed great concern about how your acceptance of the Falls Management proposal is going to create a mere black hole in Niagara Falls, where everything shifts to the casino, where there is no element of economic development. Now, you know, or you ought to know, that Hyatt, one of the major players in Falls Management, just happens to operate substantial convention facilities across the river in Niagara Falls, New York. It should come as no surprise that they wouldn't be interested in developing a competitive convention facility in Niagara region in Ontario.

This deal stinks; it reeks, it stinks to high heaven. When and how are you going to clean it up?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The member of the third party should know, or ought to know, that there has been no contract signed. We're in the middle of negotiations. The tourism component is a component that was weighted, along with five or six other things, by an independent selection committee. He'll have to wait to see at the conclusion of the negotiations if in fact there is an agreement. At that time, I think he will be pleased, along with the mayor of Niagara Falls and others who are in this spirit of uncertainty while the negotiations take place, that tourism will be enhanced and will be built upon and that this government cares deeply about that and making sure that we continue on.

But unlike the NDP, who just stated that in goodwill terms, where no private sector proponents came forward with any credibility to make it happen, this government will try to ensure that not only do we have a process that talks a good line but also over time will deliver a quality tourism package to the people of Ontario, and Niagara Falls in particular.

INVESTMENT IN ONTARIO

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. Minister, as you are aware, the Institute for Management Development recently released its world competitiveness report. This report ranked Canada 10th out of all the countries that were ranked, and in the category of government Canada is ranked seventh. I also noticed in the report that our government's ranking improved dramatically, from 23rd to 10th, in the year after this current provincial government was elected.

Minister, as the largest province in Canada, can you outline what initiatives the government of Ontario has undertaken to improve our international competitiveness?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I certainly would like to thank my colleague for the question. Canada's improved competitiveness obviously is a major contributor, but

Ontario has been the driving force as to why we have been doing the job that we have internationally. I think this government has taken the initiative. When you take a look at the approach we've taken to streamline government, overall reduction of taxes, I believe these have contributed to a very positive economy.

The economists predicted that Canada would have one of the best business environments going into the next millennium. I believe that is definitely going to happen. Ontario has been playing a leading role towards Canada's overall performance. We have put money back into consumers' pockets, and I think that has also contributed to an upsurge in the economy. Our initiatives are making Ontario once again the driver of our economy. We are helping Canada become even more competitive. Just as Ontario has helped boost Canada's position in areas such as government efficiency, I believe we have a major role to play in improving our trade performance, and that is why we're going to continue to find new markets and certainly encourage Ontario businesses to export the great products we manufacture in Ontario.

Mr Ouellette: Canada's ranking in the competitiveness report has been attributed to the strength of our domestic economy. As a nation, we ranked ahead of such economic engines as Japan, Germany and Hong Kong. Canada's domestic economy has been driven by Ontario's economic growth and job creation. For example, in my riding of Oshawa, unemployment has declined from 1997 to March 1998 by 0.2%. This means an estimated over 3,000 people from Oshawa have found jobs so far this year. Minister, what is the province going to do to promote job creation and economic growth in Ontario so that my constituents and all Ontarians have increased employment opportunities?

1430

Hon Mr Palladini: As I said in this House before, I'm willing to get on a bus, a train, a plane, even in a car to promote Ontario investments. Private sector job creation and economic growth have been a priority of this government. The province's economy has expanded by 4.3% in 1997. The average private sector forecast for growth is only 4%. Most predict that Canada is going to lead the G-7 countries in industrial growth.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): You are better at kissing voters than answering questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for Kingston and The Islands.

Hon Mr Palladini: Ontario's employment has continued to grow. Employment has increased by 32,000 in the month of April, which brings us to approximately 400,000 net new private sector jobs since June 1995. The other accomplishment of this government that I'm very proud of is that 32,000 new young people have gotten a job since February last year. That is why we're going to continue to create the positive environment that we have been creating.

TEMPÊTE DE VERGLAS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and minister responsible for francophone affairs. Le 29 janvier dernier, lors de votre passage dans la région est-ontarienne, vous avez fait la distribution de chèques, desquels nous avons entendu parler à plusieurs reprises, de 1000 \$ et de 2000 \$ aux agriculteurs. Vous les avez également assurés qu'il ne s'agissait que d'un début des compensations pour leurs pertes et dépenses encourues durant la tempête de verglas.

Les agriculteurs attendent toujours les compensations promises. La ferme Cayer de St-Albert a dû procéder à des réparations de ses édifices à un coût de plus de 80 000 \$. Il doit apporter des changements à son troupeau. La ferme Kaisin de St Isidore a connu des pertes de plus de 75 000 \$. M^{me} Campbell de Lefaire a dû déménager. Les agriculteurs de Cumberland n'ont reçu des avances que de 1000 \$ plutôt que 2000 \$ tel que promis par votre ministère.

Ma question est celle-ci. Serait-il possible aujourd'hui d'informer les membres de cette Assemblée, et rassurer les agriculteurs de l'est ontarien, quand pourront-ils finalement recevoir le financement complémentaire pour enfin mettre de côté cette fameuse crise écologique?

L'hon. Noble A. Villeneuve (ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones) : Oui, je suis fier de dire à mes collègues, et à mon collègue principalement de Prescott et Russell, que nous avons le 29 janvier dernier 1000 \$ et 2 000 \$ comme un paiement de début à ceux qui ont eu des dommages dans la tempête de verglas. Maintenant, nous avons demandé à nos cultivateurs qu'ils fassent affaire avec leur compagnie d'assurances initialement pour obtenir les factures et pour établir exactement leurs pertes.

Je suis fier de dire à mon collègue que nous sommes maintenant à rembourser nos cultivateurs qui en ont fait la demande et qui ont fourni des factures et qui ont réellement fait tout ce qu'ils pouvaient pour essayer de tout obtenir de leur compagnie d'assurances, et maintenant le gouvernement ontarien est en train de combler leurs besoins.

M. Lalonde : Les agriculteurs attendent toujours. Ils doivent procéder à remplir un cinquième formulaire. Toujours suite à cette visite du 29 janvier dernier, un employé de votre ministère faisait une déclaration à RDI rassurant les gens de la région que personne ne sortirait perdant de cette tempête de verglas, et que toutes pertes et dépenses encourues lors de cette crise seraient remboursés à 100 %. Pouvez-vous aujourd'hui-même assurer des agriculteurs qu'ils seront bel et bien remboursés à 100 % pour leurs pertes et dépenses ? Sinon, pouvez-vous nous expliquer sur quel fondement politique la promesse est basée ?

L'hon. M. Villeneuve : Comme vous le savez et comme j'ai mentionné au début, nous avions des chèques en place le 29 janvier, avant même faire aucune entente avec le gouvernement fédéral, et puis nous avons négocié longuement et durement avec le gouvernement fédéral pour assurer que nos cultivateurs seraient bel et bien récompensés. Je peux

vous rassurer que pour les dommages qui ont été subis du côté de la distribution d'électricité, nous avons immédiatement agi. Nous avons négocié longuement. Les pertes de revenus ne sont pas couvertes par le gouvernement fédéral, et il y a certainement un degré de distinction entre ceux qui étaient cultivateurs à plein-temps et ceux qui étaient cultivateurs à temps partiel chez le gouvernement fédéral.

Votre gouvernement provincial ne fait aucune distinction entre nos producteurs agricoles soit à temps partiel ou à plein-temps. Je veux rassurer mon collègue que nous faisons tout ce que nous pouvons. Nous demandons toujours que nos cultivateurs fassent affaire avec leur compagnie d'assurances premièrement, mais le gouvernement provincial est bel et bien là pour les aider.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is to the Minister of Health. I want to go back to the issue of health care restructuring in Northumberland county. I listened very carefully to what you said. You seemed to be giving a bit of a subliminal message: Be happy; everything will be all right in the long run.

But the problem here is that this case demonstrates one of the major problems with this Health Services Restructuring Commission you've got. They clearly had all the wrong information. They said it would cost \$23 million to refurbish Port Hope to meet the needs of Northumberland county and only \$10 million for Cobourg, yet when the figures are done appropriately, it's about \$19.5 million for each. The same hospital board runs both hospitals, and it's quite clear that the hospital board is hoping to have the same success that Thunder Bay had of getting itself a brand new hospital.

Minister, what input did your ministry have to the hospital restructuring commission initially and what response has your ministry made to the preliminary report of the Health Services Restructuring Commission in Northumberland county?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I remind the member that the commission is at arm's length from the government. I know there is information provided through the district health council. As I indicated to you, the interim directions were issued, and there has been an opportunity now for the community to respond and provide the information that can now be reviewed by the commission so they can issue their final directions. I feel very confident that when the final directions are issued and they have had an opportunity to carefully review all the information, again we're going to be able to see that the response is one that addresses the needs of that particular community, that is going to enable us to provide patients with the best services as close to home as they can possibly be provided.

Mrs Boyd: Minister, you have a situation where the whole community has agreed that there only needs to be one hospital. You don't even have a disagreement in this community about that.

But what you have is the Health Services Restructuring Commission suggesting that the sole hospital in the area should be a hospital that was built around a pre-World War I building that is inaccessible, that has ceilings too low to have air conditioning put in, even into the operating rooms, that has less than three acres of land and no room for expansion and that has to depend on a helicopter pad in a neighbouring school; as opposed to a building that was built by money raised by the people of Northumberland county in 1964, built so it could accommodate a second storey when expansion happened because they knew they had a growing population, that has a site with lots of room for expansion of ancillary or additional direct services, that has a helicopter pad onsite, that has trauma accreditation, that is close to the highway, as opposed to in the centre of the city, where traffic jams occur all the time.

Minister, I can't believe your ministry didn't respond to this preliminary report. You know they have elsewhere. We know your ministry, for example, suggested that forensic patients now at St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital should go to the General Hospital in St Thomas. We know your ministry responds. What did your ministry say to the preliminary report in Northumberland county?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member knows full well that when interim directions are issued I, as Minister of Health, am not in a position to make any comment. However, I do believe that if all the information has been provided to the commission, that will be very carefully considered. It's being very carefully considered right now, and I await the final report.

Again I would indicate to you, I am confident that when the final report is issued we're going to see once again an opportunity for services to be provided to individuals as close as possible to their own homes, within their own communities. It's going to be services that are going to enable us to provide the best health services and take us into the 21st century.

1440

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): My question today is to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Minister, as you know, spring is the time when home renovators are in the field doing their work. I have had calls from my constituents inquiring how scams can be avoided. In fact, we hear of people who have to pay for their full job up front or, once having paid for the job, are not guaranteed that the work will be done correctly and with the quality of work done which they paid for. Could you please tell me how the ministry helps people avoid situations provided by such scams?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I would like to thank the member for Bruce for the question. It is topical right now because this is the time of year when most people are thinking about doing renovations and it's very important for them to address this possible problem.

I might begin by saying that most renovators do provide excellent service at reasonable prices, but it's important that consumers do some background checking of their own in order to protect their own interests. A lot of this is common sense. Many people should check references, ask their neighbours or friends etc, and hire someone after they've checked them out. They need to compare prices. If they ask for guarantees, it's very important to get them in writing, as are all the terms and conditions of any contract. We all know that an oral contract is only worth what the paper it's written on is worth, which is nothing, so it's very important for us to check these things out.

Secondly, our ministry does provide valuable information and material with respect to choosing a renovator and on contracts. This covers a number of issues, not only the renovation industry but also driveway paving and any other door-to-door sales. I will just finish this part by saying that they can get further information from my ministry by calling 1-800-268-1142.

Laughter.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Madam Speaker, they might think it's funny in the opposition benches, but I guarantee you that it's the seniors of our communities who are affected by this important issue.

Mrs Fisher: We know that reference checks and business checks are good. However, sometimes people seem to slip through the system and especially find themselves prey, and those being seniors often find themselves being prey. I wondered if there is anything specific under the provisions in the Ontario consumer protection legislation that could help people avoid ending up in this renovation disaster.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Madam Speaker, I know you would appreciate this, having had this portfolio before, that what we're talking about here is consumer protection, and that is important to the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Order.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Despite the levity over there —

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me for a moment. Actually, he's quite correct, I do want to hear this answer. Could I have order, please. Minister, go ahead.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The one thing that we do have going for us in Ontario is under the Consumer Protection Act there's a cooling-off period of two days for someone who comes to your house for door-to-door sales. The good thing that we're working on right now is we're trying to harmonize the standard across the country with the other interprovincial ministers. We want to have a standard of 10 days, which will give people a better opportunity to check references and check out things, and if they have second thoughts, to make sure these are addressed.

Also, under the Business Practices Act, it gives the right to consumers to cancel a contract if they believe there has been a false or misleading statement made by the salesperson. That's very important, and there are specific examples. Last year I remember the member for Brant-Haldimand brought to my attention a whole raft of vacuum

sales in his area that were actually defrauding seniors. That, of course, was brought to the attention of our ministry and we tried to deal with it.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. It has been three years since the Premier promised in writing that your government would pass an Ontarians with Disabilities Act in your first term. Since then, we have seen nothing but delay, lip-service and evasions. Your Premier has refused to even meet with the ODA committee, the very group he promised to work with to develop this law. For 18 months, you and your predecessor have promised a consultation process to precede the drafting of the law. The budget paid lip-service to an ODA but allocated no money to it. Will you at least make a public announcement of the long-promised public consultation today?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): First of all, I thank you for your question, because this government is committed to the ODA. If you read the finance minister's budget, he committed to an ODA, and this is one of my prime concerns, one of my major priorities, as it is the Premier's.

What we are doing, when you say "as for the delay," there have been, as I'm sure you're aware, 18 studies done on the disabled if you put together those done by the provincial government and the federal government, and members of the disabled community have told me and have made it public that they do not want endless travelling studies, so I have had to take my time to consider what is the best way to achieve a balance for this province between —

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Answer, please.

Hon Ms Bassett: I'm trying to answer, Madam Speaker, if they would calm down a little bit.

We are trying to achieve a balance so that we can move in a manner that takes forward the needs of the disabled and our community as a whole, and I am committed to doing that, as is my government.

Mr Morin: "Commitment" and "action" are two different words. In an article in the *Globe and Mail* the Conservative member for Peterborough is quoted as saying that he expects the government will launch a consultation on an ODA with the disabled community this summer, led by a well-known disabled person.

Minister, you know that the disabled community has asked that the consultation be conducted by members of the Legislature, not some outside consultant, and we know the reasons why. MPPs must pass this legislation. MPPs must learn what various disabled people face. Will you agree today to have the consultation conducted by a non-partisan committee of members of this House?

Hon Ms Bassett: I am certainly committing to start our consultations some time in the summer. We are still in the process of working out the final details, and you will

be the first to know when they are in the final stage, very soon now.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Premier, on September 6, 1995, Dudley George was shot and killed at Ipperwash Provincial Park. Since then, the facts confirm that the Ontario government told the police to remove the occupiers as soon as possible. The headline in the paper the next day said of the shooting death of George, "Queen's Park to Take a Hard Line" with occupiers. The court trial proved that the first nations had no firearms. The Premier told his executive assistant prior to the high-level meeting the day of the shooting, "out of the park — nothing else." Last week documents surfaced — Premier, you know it — showing that the OPP riot squad was in fact ordered to enter Ipperwash park.

This absolutely contradicts sworn testimony by OPP officers and even the former OPP commissioner. It smells like a coverup to most of this province, Premier.

When are you going to hold an inquiry? When are you going to do the just, fair, democratic thing? Will you commit today to holding a public inquiry?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'll refer this to the Attorney General.

1450

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As you are aware, there remain a number of cases before courts and it would be most appropriate that those cases be concluded. To discuss any of the allegations the member has made pertaining to evidence that's in argument before those courts would be clearly improper.

Mr Kormos: The Premier, with the complicity of the Attorney General, has been stonewalling this thing over and over and over since September 1995. The government just wishes that the name of Dudley George is somehow going to go away. Well, I tell you, it's not going to go away, because the people of this province will not forget Dudley George.

I will tell you what's going to happen: Today I filed a letter with the clerk of the administration of justice committee. You see, we're going to hold our own inquiry. We're going to call our own witnesses. We're going to find out just what you've been hiding, Premier Harris.

Please, Harris, one more chance: Will you do the right thing? Will you declare your commitment to a full, fair public inquiry?

Hon Mr Harnick: As I've indicated, there is a number of cases before the courts. There is a number of civil cases and there is a number of criminal cases. Evidence is being adduced in all of those cases.

Certainly there is no coverup. The facts are in the public domain. They are being elicited in courts of law, where cases should appropriately be concluded.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. I'm sure we all watched with great interest last week's coverage of the NDP convention. Among the more visible points coming out of the convention was a resolution promising an end to funding cuts imposed on programs to combat violence against women.

Minister, my question for you today is, could you please inform the House exactly what this government is doing to combat violence against women?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): As you well know, our government has taken important steps both to stop the violence against women by improving the safety of women in their communities and to provide opportunities so women can be part of their community and economically independent. We've reduced income tax rates so that poor women can take more money home and spend it on their children and on their families. We've formed a partnership with the Ontario Women's Directorate so that five ministries work in the north with us to provide opportunities for women in areas where they haven't had those opportunities to become economically independent.

But the most important point is that we did establish the violence-against-women initiative called Agenda for Action, which most members of this House are aware of. We have added to the violence-against-women budget by over \$27 million over four years.

To have a resolution, an end to funding cuts imposed on programs to combat violence against women, we would welcome the support of the NDP to provide more —

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Order. Minister, wrap up.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: We actually spend more money, but we would welcome the support of the New Democratic Party, as well as the Liberals, to work with us so we can become more effective in our communities and make it a non-partisan issue. Violence against women is not to be tolerated.

PETITIONS

DIABETES EDUCATION SERVICES

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by hundreds of my constituents.

"Whereas the Diabetes Education Service in Kenora is a necessary program; and

"Whereas the Harris government has refused to provide long-term funding for diabetes education in Kenora; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has acknowledged that the program is cost-effective given the volume of clients seen and the degree of specialization required;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, join our MPP, Frank Miclash, in calling upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the Harris government provide long-term, stable funding to the Diabetes Education Service in Kenora."

I have signed my name to that petition as well.

CHILD POVERTY

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the federal government signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and passed a resolution to eradicate child poverty by the year 2000; and

"Whereas at the first ministers' meeting in June 1996, the Prime Minister and premiers made tackling child poverty a collective priority; and

"Whereas Campaign 2000 records the province of Ontario as having the highest increase in child poverty since Canada's House of Commons vowed unanimously in November 1989 to eliminate child poverty; and

"Whereas the following signatories declared their intention to support the political parties in the next federal and provincial election which convinced them that they have a plan to promote the wellbeing of all children;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to eradicate the hunger of poor children by working vigorously with the federal government to reduce the poverty rate among Canadian children, currently the second-worst in the industrialized world."

I attach my signature to the petition.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Gloucester and the surrounding area, wish to express our firm opposition to the establishment of a gambling casino in this residential community, in close proximity to two local high schools. We wish to communicate to the Legislature the widespread opposition which this has generated in the community.

"We also wish to communicate our disappointment in the total lack of democratic consultation on the part of our local city council. Decisions were made and voted on prior to any meaningful public input. We are also hereby expressing our concern for those families who will be hurt through gambling addiction, with the resulting problems of suicides, divorce, family violence and impoverishment.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose the establishment of a charity casino in Gloucester, Ontario."

I will also affix my signature.

FRAIS DE SCOLARITÉ

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud): J'ai ici une pétition qui dit :

«Attendu que les frais de scolarité ont augmenté de plus de 40 pour cent durant les trois dernières années ; et

«Attendu que depuis 1986, les augmentations annuelles du coût de la vie n'ont pas dépassé deux pour cent, tandis que les augmentations annuelles des frais de scolarité se situent entre sept pour cent et 20 pour cent chaque année ; et

«Attendu que les frais de scolarité élèvent présentement un obstacle aux étudiants postsecondaires, notamment chez les étudiants et étudiantes de milieu de faible revenu et chez ceux qui ont des responsabilités parentales ou des besoins spéciaux ; et

«Attendu que les étudiants et étudiantes paient maintenant plus de 40 pour cent des coûts de fonction des universités et des collèges ; et

«Attendu que la qualité de l'éducation se détériore, en partie à cause de la dégradation des installations de classes ;

«Nous, les soussignés, faisons appel au gouvernement de l'Ontario pour la mise en oeuvre immédiate d'un gel des frais de scolarité.»

Je suis fier de signer cette pétition et de la présenter.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas ownership of a domestic animal is a responsibility, not a right;

"Whereas owners have a responsibility to treat their domestic animal with care and utmost concern for their wellbeing; and

"Whereas cruelty to animals should be punished and sanctioned with fines, penalties and/or bans on animal ownership; and

"Whereas inspectors of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals should not be obstructed from carrying out their duties to investigate abuse and neglect;

"We, the undersigned, support the amendments to the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act."

I'm pleased to sign this petition.

ABORTION

Mr Peter North (Elgin): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

1500

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislature and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion three-year agreement with the Ontario Medical Association; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to improve patient access to chiropractic services on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors, and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service" in Ontario.

I have signed my petition on the bottom.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

I proudly affix my signature.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is from people with disabilities, and it states:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians with disabilities are important people;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request the government of Ontario to keep its promise to pass the Ontarians with Disabilities Act which would require the removal of all barriers to full participation within society by persons with disabilities. Specifically, the barriers to employment, public transportation, education, social services, communications, recreational programs and facilities, housing, consumer products and information provided to the public must be eliminated in Ontario."

This was circulated by Earl Black, and I affix my signature to it.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas the health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

I affix my signature.

ABORTION

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): "Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

This petition is signed by a number of residents from Essex county, and I affix my signature to it.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury, or illness, and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

I present the petition. It has been signed by many constituents in my riding. It was taken up by the Knights of Columbus.

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My petition is regarding the standing orders reform. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the people of Ontario want rigorous discussion on legislation dealing with public policy issues like health care, education and care for seniors; and

"Whereas many people in Ontario believe that the Mike Harris government is moving too quickly and recklessly, creating havoc with the provision of quality health care and quality education; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has passed new legislative rules which have eroded the ability of both the public and the media to closely scrutinize the actions of the Ontario government; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, when they were in opposition, defended the rights of the opposition and used the rules to their full advantage when they believed it was necessary to slow down the passage of controversial legislation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has now reduced the amount of time that MPPs will have to debate the important issues of the day; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government, through its rule changes, has diminished the role of elected members of the Legislative Assembly who are accountable to the people who elect them, and instead has chosen to concentrate power in the Premier's office in the hands of people who are not elected officials;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Mike Harris to withdraw his draconian rule changes and restore rules which promote rigorous debate on contentious issues and hold the government accountable to the people of Ontario."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement.

ABORTION

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I have a petition signed by about 600 people from the Fort Erie area, due to the good work of Arthur Almon, grand knight of the Knights of Columbus, St Michael's church, which is also my church. It deals with defunding abortions.

"The undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

In support of my fellow parishioners, I assign my signature.

OPPOSITION DAY

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I move the following motion:

Whereas Mike Harris promised Ontarians that he would not expand casino gambling, stating: "No new taxes. No new fees. No hidden taxes. My friends, I am committed to these. No photo radar, no casinos"; and

Whereas Mike Harris also said in regard to casino gambling: "I don't want a million dollars a day into the province of Ontario. I don't want the money. I don't want the Ontario government to have it"; and

Whereas Mike Harris said that gambling doesn't come cheap and that "It brings crime, it brings prostitution, it brings a lot of the things that maybe areas didn't have before. There is a big cost to pay"; and

Whereas Mike Harris said that "Every officer and every policing dollar that goes towards casino crime or that kind of criminal activity is a dollar that's taken away from fighting crime that currently exists on our streets"; and

Whereas Mike Harris criticized the former NDP government for not conducting social and economic impact studies before it introduced casino gambling; and

Whereas now the Mike Harris government is expanding gambling without regard to the impact and without regard to its commitments to Ontarians;

Therefore, this House calls upon the Mike Harris government to explain why it has not kept its campaign promises with respect to the expansion of gambling in Ontario; to listen to the communities across the province who have overwhelmingly rejected the Harris plan to establish 44 neighbourhood casinos; and to stop its attempts to force charities, municipalities and citizens into accepting these gambling halls.

1510

The Premier of Ontario has said that, and this is to be debated today. I appreciate the opportunity to raise this once again in the Legislative Assembly because I suspect it's an issue with which many members in this House are uncomfortable because of the fact that we're seeing an expansion in gambling activities, not only in this province, though that's where we have jurisdiction, but across the country and indeed across North America.

We have had gambling in this province sanctioned by government for a number of years, but when it started out it began with a good deal of caution and care. I remember one of my predecessors, the Honourable Robert Welch, who was then Minister of Culture and Recreation, established something called the Wintario lottery. The purpose of the lottery was simply to have some funds which would be available for cultural and recreational activities, funds which would be derived from the Wintario lottery but would be matched by government when various service and volunteer organization were raising funds of their own. In other words, if you were to raise a dollar, the provincial government was prepared to match that dollar

in terms of raising it for a good charitable cause, a volunteer cause, but in this case mostly for culture and recreation.

It started out with a good deal of care and caution. The minister of the day, Mr Welch, indicated that he expected this to be a very small step, that it would not be a major government undertaking. I believe he hoped at that time that we would not see the kind of escalation of gambling we've seen today. But right across this country, regardless of what the political affiliation of the government happens to be, we have seen governments move more and more into the field of gambling. I almost said "organized" gambling; I guess it's organized, in this case, by the government.

I think this is a wrong direction for the government to move in. Governments have really now started to rely more and more on the proceeds of gambling for their ongoing programs. This has got to be a matter of great concern to people in all jurisdictions where gambling has been expanded. We've had casinos out west and we've had video lottery terminals introduced in many jurisdictions. They're in the Maritimes, they're in Quebec, they're in Ontario, they're in western provinces, they're certainly across many states in the United States. I think what has happened, however, is that it has gotten out of hand. What started out as a small initiative designed to raise a modest amount of money for specific purposes has now become a major way for governments to gather money into their coffers for whatever purposes they deem appropriate.

I think one of the reasons we've seen it is that some people have tried to portray it as a voluntary tax, that nobody is compelled to pay it, that somehow it is a painless tax. I think, however, that those who have studied this field carefully would not agree with that.

I have included a number of comments that the Premier made in days gone by as Leader of the Opposition. We're wont to do that in this House; we certainly do that from time to time. But I genuinely respected the Premier, when he was leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, the third party in the House, and the Treasurer of this province today, Ernie Eves, who was then the House leader of the third party, when they stood in this House and in other venues and expressed their genuine concern about the government getting involved more and more in gambling. I thought that was positive; I thought that was reasonable criticism. I genuinely believed, with the fervour with which they stated their opinions, that we would not see this government move heavily into government gambling. Unfortunately, that has not been the case, even though on many occasions both of them have said they would not want to see gambling expanded.

I thought Premier Harris, in one of the cases he made, which was on October 6, 1992, in a question to the Honourable Marilyn Churley, who was the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations of the day, made a good point when he asked the question this way:

"Wouldn't it make more sense from a sound management point of view, something we haven't seen very much of, to do the social projections and economic studies be-

fore you announce the casino? Second, in the absence of having done that, when can we expect to see the economic and social projections and results of those impact studies, even though you've already made the announcement?"

He was obviously expressing the concern that many people in the province have, that we in this province and other provinces and other jurisdictions are moving forward rather rapidly and rather drastically into more and more gambling activities, expanding and escalating those activities without having looked at good data to determine what the impact will be on the province: on the social fabric of the province and indeed on the economy of the province.

Derwyn Shea, who is a man of the cloth, an Anglican minister, said in the *Hamilton Spectator* on March 5, 1997: "I just don't think that they're the sort of thing we need, should have or want. I feel very strongly about this. Casino gambling panders to the most vulnerable in our society. People who can least afford it tend to get caught up in it." A person who is a man of the cloth, a religious minister, tends to counsel people and encounter people who require counselling for such problems as gambling, and I thought he stated the position well in the *Hamilton Spectator*.

Mel Lastman, who is, I think everybody would agree, a free enterpriser, a person who's open to a lot of new ideas, said on February 19, 1997, when confronted with this question about charitable casinos: "Gambling is of no advantage to our city, and we don't need it. People go out and they rob and steal to get the money to gamble." That was Mel Lastman, who I think is not a person who is closed-minded to new or different ideas, expressing a genuine concern.

I thought the National Council on Welfare's publication entitled *Gambling in Canada* — this was in regard to government advertising promoting gambling — stated it very well when it said the following:

"What the advertising carefully sidesteps is the dark side of gambling. Literally hundreds of thousands of Canadians are problem gamblers and their addiction takes a toll on themselves, their friends and families, and society as a whole. Families break up, bills don't get paid and people take time off work because of their obsession with gambling. At its worst, problem gambling degenerates into a world of criminal activities spurred by the gambler's frantic search for money from every possible source."

I think they stated it well when they put that forward.

Methodist minister Tom Grey, head of the National Coalition Against Gambling Expansion in the United States, when he spoke to Belleville city council had the following to say — again worth listening to. Here's a person who has made a study of this. He does a pretty objective evaluation and comparison of what gambling was like previously and what the escalation is causing. Reverend Tom Grey had the following to say:

"Your government is addicted to the revenues it's getting from gambling and therefore it's now going after its own citizens through charity casinos. They're using charities as a Trojan horse, as a way to sell what is really a tax.

The track record on gambling is that it's not good economics, it's not good public policy and it's not good for the quality of life."

Those are just a few people who have offered observations. I suspect that in the confines of the Conservative caucus, the government caucus, there have been members who have expressed similar concerns about the expansion of gambling opportunities.

1520

I am not trying to roll back the clock. I know we've got a major casino in Windsor and a major casino in Niagara Falls, and we have one in Rama. I'm not saying today that the government or the Premier should close down those casinos and somehow end all gambling activities. It's probably unrealistic to do that today.

What I am pleading with the Legislature, with the Premier and with the government to do is to halt the escalation of gambling opportunities, to call a moratorium, to say: "Enough is enough. Let's not move forward with any more expansion of gambling activities, because they'll have a detrimental effect on our province."

I saw the government moving forward at one time with video lottery terminals — VLTs, as they are known. There was a great movement to move them into every bar and every restaurant in the province, that you would have, from municipality to municipality, people who owned bars and restaurants who would be able to operate video lottery terminals. The excuse was that somehow there were illegal ones operating out there and the only way to solve this problem was to make it legal and have the government run it.

I reject that argument. I don't think we can say the government should get into the business of selling crack cocaine, for instance, simply because someone out there is selling it illegally. The role of the government would be to prosecute in that particular case and end those particular uses. I really and truly believe that a major step forward was taken when we in the opposition and when the public in general finally persuaded the government that it should not permit video lottery terminals in bars and restaurants. I think we have halted that particular escalation.

Then there were the video lottery terminals going into the so-called charity casinos, as I've kiddingly said in this House from time to time, the new Mike Harris gambling halls around the province. I had a great concern about that. The government has put forward a change in policy which says in fact: "Somehow we can do without the video lottery terminals. We'll simply have the good, old-fashioned slot machines, along with other gambling activities, in the charity casinos."

What is happening is that charity casinos represent a major escalation in and of themselves. If you look at Niagara Falls, it's a tourist destination. More than 50% of the people who would come to that casino in Niagara Falls, or indeed to the one in Windsor, would be people from outside the area. Whether that will be the case if they establish casinos on the American side of the border, I don't know, but at the present time, one could say that they are tourist destination sites. So we differentiate those

from the charity casinos, which are proposed for various municipalities around the province.

I think it would be devastating for communities which do not have the ability to attract people from hundreds of miles away to come to their community, but rather simply to attract people from the immediate area and from that immediate community to come to do their gambling at a local casino, which could be operating seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

The people who go in there would be, by and large, people who are desperate, people who are pretty vulnerable to the attraction that gambling provides, people who are addicted to gambling. The average person may not be the kind of person who is going to go to a so-called charity casino that's located in places like Timmins or Kirkland Lake or somewhere like that where you're simply going to get people — I think of Guelph, for instance. I don't really see that people are going to be heading from New York City to Guelph to do some gambling in a charity casino.

I suspect what would happen is the people of Guelph themselves and maybe some of the surrounding villages and towns might spend their money there. I really wonder whether it would be new money that's being spent. I think it's discretionary money that's already being spent in a community. Whether it's at local stores, whether it's at local places that provide services or manufacturing centres, you're taking the discretionary dollars that people have and you're placing them into gambling opportunities which, yes, benefit the government rather immensely in terms of the dollars and cents the government derives from them, but really scratches at the fabric of that community.

I don't expect it in this debate or in this House, but I think it's important for non-cabinet government members to speak to those in the cabinet, to speak to the Premier, to speak to the people who advise the Premier, and explain how this escalation is not good for this province. That's one of the standards we must use: Is it going to benefit the province?

It will benefit the coffers of the province to a certain extent. Will it really benefit the social fabric of this province? I suspect that many people in this Legislature on all sides of the House are very worried that it will not; in fact, that it will have a very detrimental effect.

I look at the fact that fund-raising activities that service organizations are already involved in are being impacted by the government moving into new areas. People used to run bingo halls — and yes, bingo is a form of gambling, no question about that — but they would run their bingo halls and small organizations would have their group that would come out each week and have something to say, have a little bit of a social gathering. Then the provincial government started what was called a province-wide bingo. I don't even know the name of it; that is, I don't know whether it's done by television screen or something like that. Anyway, it is imposed upon the local bingo halls and the province gets a big take out of that. When you talk to the people in service clubs and organizations they say: "Look, we have lost out with some of the activities we had that didn't take in a lot of money, that didn't take a lot of

money from individuals in particular. We have lost some of that revenue because the government has in a very big way gotten into gambling and started to hurt our particular businesses."

Now the government moves into charity casinos. Let me say that the charities are simply a front for any government. British Columbia government was caught on this. They were told very firmly by a court in British Columbia, "You're simply using these casinos as a front for the government to derive its revenues."

Why does the government need that revenue? First of all, it is viewed as a painless tax. Everybody out there knows, when you go door to door, when you talk to people in our communities, that nobody likes high taxes. Nobody wants to pay taxes. We would like to get a lot of services, but none of us really wants to pay the taxes. So they see this as a way of making up for tax cuts.

This government has decided it will make a 30% income tax cut before we have a balanced budget, which means the government has to borrow that money in order to give you and me and everyone else in the province a tax cut. Because the government has lost significant potential revenue through that tax cut, the Treasurer and those in the treasury department have said: "We need these funds. We have to derive more funds and the only way it looks like we can get them relatively painlessly is through new gambling initiatives." That's why we're seeing that happen.

I look at the charity casinos, the projected gross revenues including the slot machines at the racetracks: \$1.1 billion. That's a lot of money going into gambling. Some \$460 million will go to the government. That's 65% of net revenues. If the charity casinos, for instance, are owned and controlled by people outside the province, some of the profits that go to the owners could be going outside the province. I know there are some people in Ontario in the Conservative end of things who are worried about that.

Each charity casino will have 150 slot machines and 40 gambling tables. The government has indicated it will allow more slot machines if there's a local demand. About 5,000 slot machines will be located in provincial race-tracks. Charity casinos will accept wagers on tables up to \$100. That's an increase from \$10 under the so-called Monte Carlo casinos or roving casinos.

The Ontario government will give municipalities \$1,500 a year for every slot machine they allow to set up shop. I consider that an incentive, I guess is a nice way of putting it, for local jurisdictions to accept it. They are strapped for funds. I think the government hoped that would be the case. Also, I was very concerned when I saw the government encouraging the casinos to put pressure on local councils and on those who have the powers to approve casinos at the local level.

What we're seeing across this province and across this country and in so many jurisdictions is in fact an escalation in gambling opportunities and the tearing at our fabric.

Donald Trump, who has been involved in casinos before, said in the Miami Herald something rather interesting: "People will spend a tremendous amount of money in casinos, money that they would normally spend on buying a refrigerator or a new car. Local businesses will suffer because they'll lose customer dollars to the casinos." That's a person who is in the business who says that.

Gambling and the Public Interest, a publication that I think is now widely read, says the following:

"Studies suggest higher than average rates of lateness, absenteeism, low productivity and crimes against employers (forgery, embezzlement, fraud etc) among problem gamblers. Community resources are also expended in combating the impact problem gambling has upon family and friends."

It's just study after study, which I think is very, very interesting.

1530

I want to leave some time for some of my colleagues to be able to deal with these, which is why I don't want to get into each one of these studies and quotes. What I want to say to the government through this motion this afternoon is that it's time to call a moratorium on the expansion of gambling opportunities. Where there are problems with existing venues for gambling or existing problems, the government will receive all kinds of support to try to fix those.

We have a situation that exists in Niagara Falls where there were questions in this House today calling into question, even outside of the charity casinos, some problems that have existed. In Niagara Falls I think people wanted to see more tourist activities associated with this tourist casino. It's not a charity casino; it's a tourist destination casino. They wanted to see a lot more of other activities for people to be able to take part in, in their ridings and in this specific case in Niagara Falls, and we haven't seen that happen.

I think we have a problem on our hands but I think there is the beginning of a solution. That solution is to say, "Enough is enough." That solution is to call a moratorium, a halt on the further expansion of gambling activities. There is an opportunity for this province to assume a position of leadership in doing very comprehensive, extensive studies on the impact of gambling right across Ontario. Indeed, I think we would be doing a service to this whole country, to North America and the world if we were to be the leader in that particular direction. Let's take a breather, I'm saying, a long pause from this gambling expansion.

Remember that we are preying upon the vulnerable, upon the addicted, upon the desperate people of our society. We have a responsibility to those. I know some people like to say everyone is on his own or her own, but I think we have a responsibility to those who are vulnerable, to those who are addicted, to those who are desperate not to put before them the temptations which are related to expansions in gambling.

We may benefit in the short run by the revenues which are derived from gambling, but in the long run, as we

continue to expand, we continue to tear at the social fabric of this province. We pay far too great a social price for what is revenue coming into the government to replace revenue which is lost through other tax cuts.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs Brenda Elliott): Further debate?

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): First, I want to indicate how timely this resolution is and I want to thank its mover. I want to say clearly at the outset that Mr Bradley has been very consistent on his position with regard to casinos and casino gambling. When I speak of the timeliness of it, it's timely among other things because of the revelations about the apparent corruption of the process for the development of this new, much-heralded Niagara Falls casino.

You're supposed to back up a little bit. Please understand. I know that a whole lot of folks in my communities of Welland, Thorold and the Niagara region and communities across the province go to casinos. Yes, they've told me about it. Some are winners; most are losers. They understand that as well. A casino is not about winning money; it's about losing money. You can't have winners or else the casinos don't make the incredible profits that they do. I'm hard-pressed to condemn the person, whoever it might be, who finds entertainment by going to a casino and playing the slot machines or playing the roulette wheel.

As a matter of fact, before somebody says, "Jeez, are you speaking in the dark here?" I'll tell you what — on May 1, as a matter of fact, I was down in Niagara region. You know why I was down there? I was down there because it was the Days of Action in St Catharines. Some of my friends came down to Niagara region to march in the streets. That evening we happened to have some of the other members here who entertained in their offices — not entertained but accommodated the Ukrainian interns who were here, the young students from the Ukraine who were here for the second time. Eugene Voloshchenko, who was my intern, accompanied me down to Niagara region, and that evening a couple of constituents and myself took him to Niagara Falls.

It was Friday, May 1. I remember it well. It was a very nice spring, warm, quite frankly a very pleasant evening. One could walk around, and people were in shirtsleeves. Here we were on a Friday night, at what is effectively the beginning of the season, a very pleasant, accommodating day in Niagara Falls. The attendance at the Falls themselves was rather sparse, which was unusual for me, because they're usually a major attraction. I'm talking about the Horseshoe Falls. So we walked along the Falls up to Clifton Hill, which is I suppose the heart of tourism, at least at that one level, in Niagara Falls.

I confess I perhaps don't get to Clifton Hill as often as I should, it being right in my backyard. Usually Clifton Hill is teeming with people on a Friday night, mid-spring, beautiful weather like it was back on May 1, just a few weeks ago. But the streets were bare. I took a look in some of the eating establishments. Oh, there were patrons in them, but they were sparse and few and far between, let

me tell you. I thought maybe the season really hadn't started yet. Fine.

I enjoy the relaxed comfort, but also I understand that tourists in the streets visiting the restaurants, going to the attractions — this is part of the heart, the lifeline of Niagara Falls tourism. I don't pretend to know about it from a sophisticated point of view. I've never been a tourist operator. I've spoken with lots of them and I've had a number of situations in which I've had occasion to work with them.

I told young Eugene — because he had heard, of course, about the Niagara Falls casino, as a first-time visitor to the province. I said, "Eugene, would you like to visit the casino?" He said, "Sure." Again, I anticipated that just as the streets and the shops and the restaurants were rather sparsely populated, the casino would be a somewhat relaxed atmosphere. Let me tell you, it would have knocked your socks off, because there were bare, empty streets, empty restaurants, empty tourist shops, but there was a lineup at the casino. When you finally made your way in, there wasn't a machine that wasn't being used.

Again, I don't want to condemn by any stretch of the imagination the folks who were in there doing whatever it is you do in a casino. Well, you gamble. As a matter of fact, as I walked around — and at this point I was just amazed — I realized where all the tourists were: They were in the casino. That's why they weren't in the restaurants; that's why they weren't out on the streets of Clifton Hill, walking up and down, as tourists have done for decades, for generations: They were sitting at the slot machines, just pumping the tokens with a steady rhythm.

Again, more than a few folks were neighbours, friends, folks I know from across the region — more than a few. I had occasion to say hello to them, wish them the best of luck. But the casino was packed. There's no two ways about it: Casinos are an incredibly powerful attraction to people in general. And once again, I've got to confess I do not understand — I'm not disputing that people obtain or get some entertainment value from this. Gosh, I suppose I'd rather see a movie or go bowling or any number of —

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): You bowling?

1540

Mr Kormos: Go bowling. Down in Welland there are half a dozen bowling lanes — not quite that many left. Welland is a big bowling city. My neighbour Rob Wightman is an ardent competitive bowler and travels across — he works over at Stelco when he can work. Of course, unemployment is up in the Niagara region since the Tories got elected. You've got to know that.

These are things that I, in my experience growing up in a community like Welland, associate with entertainment. You go to the arena. You watch a hockey game. I appreciate that's a spectator sport, but what do you expect? You watch a hockey game. You go out to the Welland soccer dome up on Rice Road. You watch a soccer game or, if you're more fit than I am, you play soccer.

I appreciate that there are a whole lot of seniors there and I've got to hope that the seniors are sophisticated and

experienced enough that they set themselves a budget for the evening and live by it. I would like to hope that was their style, and I suspect most of them do it. I have no hesitation in telling you that.

Why I raised my admitted amazement about how all the tourist population of Niagara Falls appeared to be concentrated in the casino was to acknowledge what an incredibly powerful draw it is. It's clear there's a whole lot of money to be made running casinos. There's no two ways about it.

Interestingly, Windsor, which attracts fewer gross numbers of patrons, has more money bet per patron than does Niagara Falls. That's just the stats that were released recently. I'd be interested in some explanation of that.

We ought to have learned. Look, there were those of us who opposed casino gambling here in Ontario, and I appreciate that war has been lost. I have no hesitation in saying that battle has been lost. One of the things we expressed concern about was the rationale that casino gambling was somehow an integral tool in local economic development. I regrettably suggest to you that the experience of Windsor and Niagara Falls very much sustains the argument that, no, casinos are not a panacea for an economy that was gutted first by Brian Mulroney's trade deal with Ronald Reagan, and then further by Jean Chrétien's waltz with the Americans, with NAFTA. Casinos certainly aren't the panacea. It's quick jobs; I don't hesitate in acknowledging that.

The government was warned about the corruptibility and corruptiveness of casino gambling. They were told time and time again, and this government assured people who had —

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: Look, if you don't want to hear it from me, there are thousands out there who participated in public hearings, who condemned this government's introduction of electronic slots, video lottery terminals — call them whatever you want. The fact remains that they're the slickest thing since buttered popcorn. The fact remains that these electronic VLTs, yes, are designed very specifically by some very sophisticated operators to be as addictive as any gambling practice ever could be, hence the label "the crack cocaine of gambling."

Remarkably, evidence that was unearthed during the course of this government's committee hearings about high-tech, high-speed electronic slots indicated very clearly that the market — we're not talking about the old one-armed bandit; we're talking about an integration of the fundamental philosophy of the one-armed bandit, but accompanied by all the qualities of the best and fastest and most sophisticated video games, along with an incredibly sophisticated high-tech manipulation of the player — for those types of machines is very much young, and even younger, people.

Some of the same operators who have cultivated a generation of young people whose lives have been Nintendoed are the same people developing these electronic slots that this government, yes, would dearly love to see in every bar, every tavern and every restaurant in every neighbour-

hood in every municipality in this province. Very sophisticated stuff, scary stuff.

We heard from the racetracks, and one racetrack operator was candid enough — my colleague across the way here would understand — to talk about the level of sophistication of these slots. At racetracks now you can bet your pony without going to a parimutuel person. You put your ticket in the machine, if it's a winning ticket, and you punch in the name or the number of your horse or whatever grey mare happens to be running that day, and you sit there and wait for the results. I think I've got it reasonably correct.

Mr Pouliot: It's always a number.

Mr Kormos: Number of horse and number of race, at a specific track.

The operator of one major racetrack in the province appealed to the committee to implement their VLTs, video lottery terminals, electronic slots, video slots as quickly as possible because the technology is such that they can take horse players, sit them there, let them bet their horse at this video-screened machine, and while the horse is running — you know your little picture-in-picture on the little RCA you've got at home, where you get the second channel down in the lower right-hand corner? From time to time you tire of the parliamentary channel and you might switch on C-SPAN or something. While the race is running in the lower right-hand corner, you can bet the slots at the very same machine without ever getting up to go.

I tell you, that's the level of sophistication. There are big bucks here, incredibly big bucks; big bucks to the extent that corruption becomes almost inevitable. In the instance of this government's handling of the Niagara Falls casino, it appears that corruption has very much become part and parcel of the process.

Recall what you heard earlier today when the leader of the New Democrats, Howard Hampton, in his question to the Premier made reference to some very fine investigative reporting by the *Toronto Star* that was published over the course of the weekend, and referred to portions of that article that named names, left you in a position where you were forced to draw the irresistible conclusion that there was more than a little bit of backroom jiggery going on in the course of this government's development of casino gambling.

It very much appears that a pretty high-profile gang of Tories and friends of this government did more than a few huddles deep in the bowels of high-priced steakhouses to ensure that this government's best friends had the best crack at ownership of a very, very lucrative business. Once again, the gambling business depends on people losing money. There are no winners. At the end of the day, everybody loses.

1550

We heard about and read on the weekend about this Ontario Gaming Coalition, a small team, ad hoc, that put themselves together to advocate for the expansion of private-profit, corporate-owned gambling casinos; folks like Leslie Noble, no stranger to Premier Harris, I'm sure not necessarily well known by a lot of his caucus because,

after all, she was instrumental in writing the Common Sense Revolution and that was very much an inner-circle sort of exercise.

Another member of that group was one Andrzej Kepinski. You read about him a couple of weeks ago and the sad trail he left behind himself, leaving a trail of more than a few disappointed partners. This fellow was instrumental in putting this Falls Management team together. The Falls Management team, let's understand, was the successful bidder. They were the successful bidder.

Understand, there were folks in Niagara Falls, including its mayor, who had acquired some real optimism about the future of Niagara Falls and the Niagara region — and not just in Niagara Falls, of course across the Niagara region, because we all share in the development of meaningful tourism — who applauded the development of the Gateway concept. The one crucial element that every expert has consistently identified as being essential to making Niagara Falls something more than a mere one- or two-hour stop for the tour buses is the development of a significant convention centre. The government knew about that advice because indeed that was part of the package when it called upon bidders, and that was that the casino project include amenities that complement legitimate tourism and that will indeed help spread that tourism economy beyond the walls of Casino Niagara.

Gosh, there was one bidder, the Fallsview group, that proposed as a part of their bid some 19,000 square metres of convention space and indeed were spoken of as being first in the tourism angle — tourism, as compared to mere hard-core, "take the money and run, empty the pockets, siphon and grab them by the ankles, turn them upside down, shake every last nickel and dime out of them" casino operators. The Fallsview group rated first in tourism with their just shy of 19,000-square-metre convention centre. They were out of the picture. It appears they didn't have the connections. It appears they didn't know the right people in the right places. It appears that they may not have been in the dark, smoky back rooms with the right people at the right time.

It looks to me like they tried to do it the legitimate way. It looks to me like Fallsview had a legitimate concern and interest in the overall development of tourism in Niagara Falls and the Niagara region. It looks to me and a whole lot of people down in Niagara today that the Fallsview Group — oh, they understood that a casino was supposed to be an element of this development, but they understood that a casino was about one piece in a bigger tourism development puzzle. What do they get for being rated first? They get the boot by these guys. They're out, they're gone. They didn't know the right people.

Mr Pouliot: They didn't play the game.

Mr Kormos: They didn't play the game. I guess there wasn't enough grease in the wheels. When I talk about the corruption and corruptiveness of this kind of big-money exercise, that's exactly what we're speaking to — the grease.

It becomes even more apparent what's going on here when you note that Hyatt, one of the big players in the

successful bidding operator, a member of the Falls Management group, proposed convention space of — oh, what did I say earlier today? — one ninth the square footage, really, quite frankly, a meaningless amount and something that effectively abandons the prospect of a convention centre in the city of Niagara Falls. Hyatt, you see, operates a whole lot of convention space across the river, over in Niagara Falls, New York. They own and operate those operations. Talk about a little bit of a sweetheart package deal here. You get the message, don't you, Speaker? I know you do.

Hyatt is covering its own interests in the United States, you bet your boots they are, at the sacrifice of tourism in Niagara Falls and Niagara, at the expense of small business and would-be working people in Niagara Falls and across the Niagara region and, I have no doubt, perhaps at some modest expense to themselves. You see, this kind of largess doesn't come cheaply. The kind of largess enjoyed by Hyatt, what does it amount to? It basically means that the casino project in Niagara Falls, intended originally by Niagara Falls and proposed by every expert consulted to be part and parcel of a much larger thing, a sports complex, a convention centre — Hyatt somehow, as one of the players, made sure that the successful bid, one they were very much involved in, included minimal convention space. They've got obligations across the river. They have every intention of seeing Niagara Falls, New York, convention space utilized at the expense of the future of tourism in Niagara.

Earlier today I suggested to the minister in charge, the Chair of Management Board, that this whole deal reeks, stinks to high heaven, that it's a thorough betrayal of the people of Niagara Falls and indeed across Niagara region. It's a perfect illustration of how corrupt the casino industry can become when it has partners like this gang sitting in the government benches.

Economic development, my foot. The interests of tourism, give me a break. There's a whole lot of money made here, a whole lot of money to be made. A whole big chunk of it is going to be siphoned off into the United States. Very little of it is going to fall into the pockets of hard-working women and men, many of them unemployed for far longer than any person should ever have to be, because of Mike Harris's policies. Very little of it is going to go into the pockets of those women and men looking for some economic growth in the Niagara region, which has suffered increased unemployment since the election of Mike Harris and the Tories and hasn't seen any of those promised jobs. Oh, never mind that the Premier — how many did he promise? How many did Mike Harris promise?

Mr Pouliot: Some 725,000.

Mr Kormos: He promised 725,000. We're into this a good two and a half years now. How do you like it so far? Those jobs aren't down in Niagara region, where unemployment levels are up, where unemployment among youth is twice that of their parents, where this government imposes user fee on top of user fee, is in the process of shutting down hospital after hospital, shutting down up to 30 schools across Niagara region. They don't get it. They

don't understand. This government has been borrowing more and more money, creating more and more deficit, more and more debt, not to finance health care, not to finance education, not to take care of kids or the poorest in our society, but to take care of their richest friends.

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This deal in Niagara Falls is oh so consistent with everything these guys have done from day one here at Queen's Park, let me tell you. Beat the hell out of working people, ignore the plight of seniors, impose more and more new user fees, shut down hospitals, shut down schools. By God, when it comes to building a casino with their corporate buddies, they're there, the government's there. Just pull the chain and they'll nod and say all the right things: "The door's open. This is the new Ontario."

The fact is that the abandonment of tourism by this government in Niagara, the abandonment of the convention centre as an integral part of the casino development — let's understand. Look what kind of proposal they accepted from Falls Management, as compared to the Fallsview Group. Falls Management is an American-partnered operation. It's a Toronto-Chicago-Buffalo consortium. Its proposal is for a \$411-million casino and that's it, virtually nothing more. The Fallsview Group, which had a far more enlightened view about the role of the casino in Niagara Falls as part of a broader tourism package, including a major convention centre, as I told you, nine times the square footage being offered by Falls Management, and which was prepared to spend \$905 million, rated number one when it comes to tourism, somehow they're not in the running.

Maybe they weren't burdened with actors like Andrzej Kepinski and Paul Snyder. Maybe that's why Fallsview didn't get the contract with this government. Kepinski and Snyder were key players in getting Falls Management, the successful bidder, in getting that team together. They're also the ones with the history of failed businesses, bankruptcies and non-payment of taxes. Maybe this government simply prefers to deal with the ilk of those. Maybe there's something about them that —

Mr Pouliot: Makes them comfortable?

Mr Kormos: No, maybe they've got far more in common with this government as defaulting taxpayers, bankrupts and failed business people. Maybe they've got something far more in common with these people than the Fallsview Group — competent, successful people with a vision about the future of Niagara rather than a mere siphoning of as much money as fast as they can, which is what this casino proposal is designed to do, from the tourists that venture into Niagara Falls who are from every single possible targeted residence across the Niagara region, Hamilton, well through beyond the Golden Horseshoe.

This is a sordid, sordid thing this government has got itself involved with. It is one which, quite frankly, takes us back a good 15 or 20 years when this was the norm when it came to doing business. Surely to God there's no place for these types of backroom deals in Ontario in 1998 when

so many working people are suffering so much because of so many new burdens placed on them by this government.

Let's take look at it: What's the entry point? How is it done? — just a little bit of a Coles Notes primer on how you do business. What's the starting point? How do you get into the inner circle? I suppose Leslie Noble is as good an entry point as any, a long-time Tory hack player, or perhaps George Boddington. One of his clients is the Latner family, majority owners of Greenwin Properties and Dynacare health labs. Those companies, in 1995 and 1996, donated at least \$48,000 to these provincial Conservatives. Maybe that's the entry point. Let's be fair about this. Let's be open so that folks who are listening can understand how it is, what it is and the way it is that you've got to do business with this government. If you know Leslie Noble, if you know Tory lobbyist George Boddington, if you know Toronto lawyer David McFadden, a former Tory party president and MPP back in the 1980s, maybe that's the beginning.

But I think it's more than simply knowing people. I mentioned the \$48,000 contributed in 1995-96. You've got to ask yourself, in view of all the high-priced help the Premier surrounds himself with — I know what Mr Murdoch called them, and I'm not going to endorse that. I'm talking about the inner circle. I'm talking about people who make the big bucks. They may not necessarily be directly on the Premier's payroll. From time to time, certain caucus members suffer as a result of this backroom decision-making and resent it. I understand that.

If this is the entry point, you've got to question why it is that the government would buy into a \$411-million straight gambling deal when it had offered to it a \$905-million broader tourist complex with a major convention centre. It doesn't make common sense, does it? It doesn't make common sense at all. It doesn't make any sense. What it speaks to and what it encourages is the simple question: Is somebody on the take? It's a question to be put. How else could that happen in 1998 in Ontario to the Niagara region, which is suffering as a result of crushing government policies, leaving it with the highest unemployment?

This slot machine regime has every likelihood, probability of becoming as corrupt and corrupted as this rotten deal in Niagara Falls is.

I'm moved to support this resolution.

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Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the opposition motion today, put forward on behalf of the Liberal Party by the member for St Catharines.

I thought I would speak briefly on the history of gaming, not only in Ontario but also in Canada. The member for St Catharines spoke for some time about the history of gaming in Canada, since it has been taken over by government, as being done in a careful and cautious manner. Today, I would like to emphasize the care and caution with which our government is proceeding with gaming matters.

If you look back at the history in Canada of gaming, originally there was some gambling and gaming that went on in Canada before governments controlled it, and the great concern was that there was a need for it to be regulated; that it probably couldn't be stopped altogether.

As a person who rarely, if ever, buys even lottery tickets, I understand there is still a good deal of interest in gambling. My understanding is that 85% of the people in Ontario purchase lottery tickets or participate in other forms of gambling, so it's incumbent upon government to make sure that if there is gaming activity, it be done carefully and properly, regulated by government at the time.

In 1985, the federal government amended the Criminal Code to allow the provinces to have total control over lotteries. There are other members in the House who've had the opportunity in previous governments to look at the issue of gaming revenues. In fact, one of them was the member for St Catharines, who in 1990, when he was Minister of the Environment, played a role in Bill 114 being passed. At that time, Bill 114 was passed to add protection of the environment to the list of beneficiaries from lottery revenues in the province. I'm sure we all applaud the fact that if there are to be lotteries, the revenues from them can be used for issues such as protecting the environment; that's certainly a topic of great issue and concern in my riding.

Later in my remarks, and possibly in the remarks of other government members today, you will hear how, if there are expanded revenues from the plan we have for gaming in Ontario, we would like the benefits of that to go to health care. There may be the potential for added revenue to expand our health care in Ontario. It's something I'm sure even the opposition members would support.

In 1992 the NDP government, through an order in council, created the three-day roving Monte Carlo system. That is a system that people in my riding know very little about. My understanding is that it tended to be concentrated mostly in urban areas of the province. This is the very system which became a thorn in the side of some communities, and certainly the police and some charities complained about it as well.

What we wanted to develop, with the recent announcements made by the Chair of Management Board, is a more tightly regulated gaming program in the province. We certainly looked at the comments we heard about the Monte Carlo system. We decided to show some leadership to ensure that communities and charities are protected through a tightly managed and regulated charity gaming system. We didn't put the roving Monte Carlo nights into neighbourhoods throughout the province; that was the doing of the previous NDP government, actually. We weren't the first to bring commercial casinos into the province and we haven't expanded the lottery system either. During the time the Liberals were in government, they introduced a list of games including Pick-3, Encore and Wintario Extra, which were added to the lottery system during the 1980s.

One thing that might be of interest to the mover of the motion is that there is considerable interest in expanding

gaming even within the Liberal caucus. I understand that the member for Timiskaming recently indicated publicly that he felt it would be a good idea to have a casino on the Ontario Northland train. In fact, from the quote I've been provided, I understand the member for Timiskaming said: "I believe now is the perfect time to put a casino on the passenger train. It's time to take advantage of our four-season tourism."

So you can see there certainly are pressures around the province and within different political parties to expand gaming. But what we really want to do, rather than expand gaming, is make sure that gaming in the province goes on in a tightly regulated fashion. As the Chair of Management Board has outlined in several recent comments, we want to make sure there is a cautious, safe approach; we want to make sure, with charity casinos, that we replace the 4,900 roving Monte Carlos, which have been virtually impossible to regulate. Our goal is to properly manage and regulate the commercial and charity casinos and to ensure that communities like Niagara Falls, Windsor and Orillia can continue to enjoy the increased number of jobs and the extra dollars from tourism that their regions have experienced. We have learned that through tight control and decisive management of the industry, these goals can be achieved.

I'd like to make a few more remarks just to clarify what the roving Monte Carlos are, because I know a lot of people around the province and in my riding don't really know very much about them. We felt that tighter control and regulations have been long overdue.

There were 15,000 gaming days held under 4,900 licences while the roving Monte Carlos were in place. In Toronto alone, there were more than 300 different locations for these Monte Carlos, and between 1993 and 1997 the Monte Carlo industry had grown over 400%. It seemed that every time you turned around in Toronto, you'd see another sign for one of these Monte Carlos. They were mostly located in hotels, restaurants and other public facilities that were close to schools and residential areas. It was possible for anyone, and sometimes even kids, to enter them unintentionally. This caused parents a considerable amount of worry and it was a great concern for the police.

We weren't the only ones who were distressed by the growth of these Monte Carlo operations. The police forces came to our government and expressed their concern. They said that due to the temporary nature of the Monte Carlos, it was impractical to install state-of-the-art security and surveillance equipment. If you have been to any of the full-time operating casinos in Ontario, you will know that there are very tight security arrangements and surveillance equipment. Right near my riding, of course, is the Rama casino. I have had a briefing on that, and I'm very impressed with the level of security there, the number of cameras and the number of police officers present at all times to make sure that the operation is done properly.

We have heard from some charities as well. These are the organizations that the charity casinos and the former Monte Carlo operations were supposed to help. Organiza-

tions like the Canadian Diabetes Association, the Kidney Foundation, the Canadian Cancer Society, the March of Dimes were losing money under the old system that had been brought in by the NDP. Charities like these were eventually driven to criticize and demand changes to the system. Who can blame them? After all their efforts and the expense of advertising and operations, the charities were only getting a nominal fee, an average of \$675 a day, when proceeds were 10 times that amount. In 1996 the operations alone consumed \$90 million out of \$100 million generated, with only \$10 million going to charity.

Anyone with common sense could see that the old NDP system just wasn't working. We had two options: We could shut down the roving Monte Carlos completely, leaving charities without any funding, or we could work with the stakeholders to bring about changes and better regulate the system. Many charities were unsupportive of a plan to eliminate the Monte Carlos without a replacement, and concerns about the Monte Carlos were also brought forward by the Canadian Foundation on Compulsive Gambling, who had pointed out that the small number of potential problem gamblers were difficult to identify within the Monte Carlo system because there were so many venues to attend and because they were constantly changing in location.

We heard from police, community groups, municipalities and charities, and we agreed with all of them. The system needed fixing. We were grateful they took the time to tell us how we should change it, and they made many recommendations, so the initiative that we introduced on April 9 became a reality largely because of the cooperation of these groups which will benefit from the new system.

Our government was the first to put a comprehensive gaming system in place. What we're trying to ensure is that the consultations with the public and the stakeholders will result in a proper setup, that we have better management and planning of the industry through the creation of a gaming secretariat to help guide the direction of all forms of gaming and measure its impact and through tighter regulation and enforcement, including the creation of the illegal gaming unit, which is a specialized unit with 42 full-time members dedicated to reducing illegal gambling and rerouting the proceeds of these crimes back into the justice system. We're going to do this through the Ontario Lottery Corp. Through several governments, the lottery corporation has gained an excellent reputation for the responsible management of various forms of gaming in the province.

On March 31 we shut down the three-day Monte Carlos. That brought an end to a legacy of disarray and it now gives us the opportunity to implement a tighter regulation and control of the charity gaming program. On April 9 we announced that we would replace Monte Carlos with a small number of fixed-site, well-supervised charity casinos. These charity casinos would not be able to operate without sponsorship from local charities.

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They also must be supported by the municipalities. If the municipality says they don't want one, they won't have one. It's that simple. We're not going to try and sell to the municipalities. They're going to make their own decision on this if they want it in the community.

The public told us they didn't want gaming in neighbourhood bars, restaurants or corner stores. We've listened to that. They won't be allowed in residential areas. They will also be safe and secure. Children will not be allowed.

There will be no additional gaming days as a result of the new model than the province had when the roving Monte Carlos were running.

The illegal gaming unit has already been very active. It has levied fines of close to \$1 million already. It has laid over 1,000 charges for illegal gaming. It has seized \$378,000 in proceeds from criminal activities. Last week, under an operation called Project Storm, the unit successfully raided 22 restaurants and bars; 60 business owners and employees were charged with keeping common gaming houses and 60 video lottery terminals were seized. It's this kind of action that's helping to clean up gaming in Ontario. That allows us to protect communities and charities. Under the new system, charities will have more stable revenues and they will operate in a safer, more secure environment.

We want the public to know exactly where the revenue is going. That's why we're introducing full disclosure and an annual report tabled in the Legislature.

The Ontario chief of police recently sent a letter to our government: "Thank you for taking into consideration the concerns of the policing community in your decisions on charity casinos. We're committed to working in partnership with the government to resolve issues proactively, before they become a problem. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this."

Our new approach to gaming is making itself felt in other areas of the industry as well. Through the new gaming secretariat, we're taking steps to bring tighter control to the commercial casino arena. It's important to remember the support that controlled gaming has received even from Liberal members. The member for Windsor-Walkerville said in 1996, "I support properly planned, properly regulated casinos."

We're pleased to report that local support for the province's commercial casinos has also been overwhelming. Recently, Mayor Wayne Thomson of Niagara Falls told a conference, "When the casino arrived, it was a boon for a city where cross-border shopping had devastated the local economy and where some major hotels were three years behind in their taxes."

In fact, 79% of citizens felt safe walking down the streets compared to 59% before the casino opened. The high visibility of the downtown directed patrol unit and the increased number of pedestrians both contributed to an increased sense of security by the public.

Our goal has been to emphasize these high standards of safety. I'm pleased to say that law enforcement officials in

both Windsor and Niagara are reporting low levels of crime. Earlier this month, the Niagara Regional Police stated that "the policing problems commonly associated with gambling — prostitution, drugs and organized crime — didn't materialize."

Before closing, I have to talk about problem gambling. We realize that 98% of the population is able to gamble responsibly, but there will always be those in society in need of help. More than any other government in Ontario, we've committed up to \$20 million to dealing with these problems, whether it be through counselling sessions or self-banishment from the facilities.

Each of the casinos has developed programs to deal with problem gambling, including staff who are trained to identify problem gamblers.

Communities like Niagara Falls, Windsor and Orillia are enjoying unprecedented levels of success. I know Windsor has expressed enthusiasm for the economic benefits of the casinos it plays host to.

What I've outlined today is the government's decisive plan of action for bringing about badly needed reform to the gaming industry on all levels. This government has listened and will continue to listen to the stakeholders. We listened to the police, the charities, and to compulsive gaming experts, all of whom were uncomfortable with the status quo of Monte Carlos and illegal gambling in Ontario.

Police tell us that there are up to 20,000 illegal video lottery terminals in Ontario, machines that don't benefit charities, communities or health care. The Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, who is responsible for the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, has assured us that every effort will be made to find these machines, shut them down and charge their operators. We're making sure that we get this kind of activity out of hotels, halls and restaurants and into a few controlled, well-secured permanent facilities in non-residential areas where children are clearly not permitted.

The responsibility of the government is to ensure that our communities and charities are protected through regulation of the industry, that gaming is conducted in a safe and secure environment and that any revenues generated should benefit all Ontarians. I believe that by closing down Monte Carlos, confiscating illegal VLTs and making well-supervised, secure charity casinos available, we're meeting those responsibilities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr John R. O'Toole): Further debate?

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): The quote that we have to read is the one made by one Michael Harris, PC leader, May 17, 1993. This is Michael Harris, who is now the Premier of the province. He said: "As Donald Trump says, 'Gaming doesn't come cheap.' I have to agree with a lot of the critics on that. It brings crime, it brings prostitution, it brings a lot of the things that maybe areas didn't have before. There is a big cost to pay."

Here's another quote from Michael Harris. On this one, he's Premier: "I don't want a million dollars a day into the

province of Ontario. I don't want the money. I don't want the Ontario government to have it."

It's really disturbing to hear what's been happening, especially in light of this issue, in the last couple of weeks, when this government claims that it has a very sensible, rational, controlled program about this gaming expansion. We can see the situation in Niagara Falls. We have a situation where the government now, it has been revealed — as you know, there's this new mega-casino in Niagara Falls, but it seems that the people who got the contract for this mega-casino were some important members of the ruling Conservative Party: lobbyists, campaign backers and party officials. It also says the winning bidder of this so-called controlled gaming expansion in Niagara Falls, for instance, was actually rated third by government and tourist experts seeking a unique, prestigious, first-class facility.

Are we to have confidence in this government if it's going to continue to expand casinos across Ontario? It's going to put 44 more casinos in Ontario. This is beyond the ones in Niagara Falls, Windsor and Rama. Forty-four more? How can we have confidence when we see this mammoth new casino which is worth, I think, about \$1 billion was given to the third-place finisher in the bidding? They said the winning bid even lacks the major convention centre Niagara Falls requires. It wasn't even in the bid. They still got the contract to build this mega-casino in Niagara Falls.

It's obvious that we have to have an independent person or persons look at the awarding of this contract, because if this is the way this government is going to do business, it raises so many questions. They turned down Raymond Moriyama in one of the bids, said he wasn't good enough to design this casino. They picked someone else. Who did they pick? They picked someone who supposedly had a history of bankruptcy. He was part of the winning bid in Niagara Falls. We're supposed to have confidence in this government to bring in another 44 when in Niagara Falls they didn't even accept Raymond Moriyama, said he wasn't good enough, when the third-place-rated company got the award in Niagara Falls, a \$1-billion contract? It makes you wonder whether this government really knows what it's doing and how it does things in this gaming industry.

This is a government that prides itself on doing whatever it wants to do, despite the fact that most municipalities in Ontario turned down gambling and casino expansion in the November election. Almost every city and municipality across Ontario said they didn't want gaming and casino expansion. This government is still proceeding with 44 casinos, seven of them in Metro Toronto alone. Everybody in Toronto voted against it; the vast majority voted against the expansion. This government said, "No, we're going to give you seven casinos in Toronto. We're going to give another 44 in total across Ontario," when most municipalities voted against it in a referendum. So why are they still pushing these 44 casinos down the throats of the communities across Ontario? I think this government is hooked on, is addicted to gam-

bling revenues. It is desperate to get these revenues so that it can pay for, obviously, a variety of its tax cuts and whatever other folly they're involved in.

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They're refusing to listen to or look at what people have said. Look at their latest announcement of about a month ago when they said: "Oh, by the way, we're not giving you VLTs any more. We're just going to give you the low-tech, one-armed bandits, slot machines, so they're different." It just means you lose a little slower, but they're still going to force slot machines down the throats of most Ontarians. They thought they could fool people by saying: "Oh no, we won't call them VLTs. We're going to call them slot machines."

It's just low-tech, one-armed bandits, but they're still highly addictive gaming machines that do one thing, extract money, because we all know that with people who go into casinos or use slot machines, basically most of them lose. It's a way of extracting hundreds of millions of dollars from Ontarians quickly. This government is addicted to that extraction and refuses to even listen to people who have said, "No, we don't want them." They're saying, "It doesn't matter what you said, we're still going to shove them down your throat."

Then they say: "Oh yeah, we're going to now call them slot machines. They're not VLTs any more." It's like someone said: The VLTs were like the crack cocaine. Now the slot machines are just plain cocaine. It's still addictive, it's still dangerous and it still destroys lives.

Then they said: "Oh, by the way, we're going to give money from gambling and slot machines to health care, so if you support health care, you've got to support our gambling expansion program, you've got to support slot machines." What kind of position do they put ordinary Ontarians in? They said: "Do you want better health care? Well, you have to support our casinos. Do you want better health care? You have to support our slot machines."

This is out-and-out blackmail. That's all it is. In other words, if you care about a better hospital, if you care about emergency departments that work, you have to vote and accept their slot machines and their 44 casinos. This is the lowest of the low any government can do, basically making people make a choice between a rock and a hard place. People don't want gambling expansion, yet now this government says, "If you want it, we're going to give you something good at the end of it." This is not the way you do business in a democratic society. You give people the option, but you don't force them by saying, "If you want health care, you have to have slot machines."

This is not the tradition of this province, yet this government has now linked the two so they can push people towards voting for them, so they can push public opinion. But I don't think the people of Ontario will buy it because the people of Ontario know that this government's trying to bribe them, to blackmail them, saying, "Oh no, these things are good because they're associated with health care."

It's not the right thing to do and it's a government that's hell-bent on doing this no matter what the evidence

is. As you know, there was a BC Supreme Court ruling earlier this year that basically said that what the government was doing in gambling expansion, taking money from charities, was contrary to the Criminal Code of Canada. This government, despite that ruling in British Columbia, is still proceeding down the same road that the British Columbia Supreme Court ruled was contrary to the Criminal Code of Canada.

This government didn't even bother to check it out with independent third-party advocates or lawyers to see whether or not their scheme of gambling expansion was contrary to the Criminal Code of Canada. They refused to even check this out, to see whether maybe they were violating the Criminal Code of Canada by this gambling expansion program, because, as you know, in British Columbia a judge ruled that this type of inordinate expansion of government into gaming is a violation of the Criminal Code. The judge was very clear on that. He said that the British Columbia system, which is basically the same, where all kinds of money that used to go to charities now goes to government coffers, is a violation of the law of the land.

This government didn't even take the time to consult, as I said, with an independent panel of lawyers or jurists to see whether or not this legislation on gambling expansion also violates the Criminal Code of Canada. They're talking about this is a law-and-order government. This is a government that talks about crime control. They didn't even check to see whether this legislation violates the Criminal Code.

I challenge this government and the crime commissioner sitting right across from me, check to see whether this gambling expansion violates the Criminal Code of Canada. I would like to see a ruling from an independent third party to see whether this expansionary scheme of gambling in 44 casinos across this province is a violation of the law of this land. They have not done this. They have not dared to take it to an independent third party to see whether this is a Criminal Code violation.

Here we have a government that says, "Trust us. We are going slowly and carefully," but we know their whole cover has been blown in Niagara Falls. The whole process in Niagara Falls shows that they don't know what they're doing or they've done things just by talking to the right people. How could a third-place finisher win the contract in Niagara Falls? How could Raymond Moriyama be shut out? How could a convention facility be allowed there when it seems the owner of the bid that won in Ontario comes from Niagara Falls, New York, on the other side? He won part of the bid here in Canada, yet he owns part of the action on the other side of the border. That's why I think we have to slow down and ask for an investigation of the reckless, crazy gambling expansion program that this government has undertaken.

This may be the most incredible part of this whole approach of this government. This is a government that's awash in revenues. They don't need all this money from casinos in every neighbourhood, they don't need these thousands of slot machines, because the economy has been

improving. I don't understand why they still push this reckless expansion, and I hope we have a full-blown, independent commission of inquiry into what's happening in Niagara Falls. That will blow the lid off this whole gambling expansion scheme. Let's have a full-blown inquiry.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further debate?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I'm happy to have some time to be able to speak on this motion that I support and will begin by quoting someone from Vegas — he's a casino owner, a M. Stupak: "When we put 50 slot machines in, I always consider them 50 more mousetraps. You have to have a mousetrap to catch a mouse." He continues by saying: "You can't disguise this industry. You can have Streisand, but it is what it is. It's our duty," he says, "to extract as much money from the customer as we can and send them home with a smile on their face." That's what it's about. That's what these slot machines, casinos, gambling are all about.

I've got to admit to you that I'm not a gambler of that sort. I will also admit that from time to time I buy a lottery ticket, a 6/49. I do that because, like every other ordinary homo sapiens on this planet, we all want to make a fast buck — it's true — socialists included. It's true, yes. I won't share with you what I would do with my money, but as a socialist I would share my money I think a little better than my friends here on the right and the Tories on the other side. We would redistribute that wealth in a way that is fitting for a socialist. I buy that lottery ticket every now and then, but I have to admit, beyond that I'm not much of a gambler. It's not in me.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): Did you ever play bingo in Nanaimo?

Mr Marchese: I used to play bingo when I was a kid.

Mr Conway: In Nanaimo?

Mr Marchese: No, I didn't.

I've been in Edmonton. My nephew was getting married there and they said, "Let's go to the casino there." "What would I do in a casino?" I was saying to myself. But I did accompany some of the family members who wanted to go. There are people who want to go, I admit that. As they went to gamble their money away — just like Mr Stupak says, "We take their money and send them home with a smile" — I sat there having a nice Scotch with some ice, because every now and then I like some ice on that Scotch, and I drank that Scotch, possibly two, and waited for them to lose their few dollars, and then we left.

That's the extent of my gambling experience. I have very little gambling experience. But I do know that if I went to gamble my money, it would be gone. The good thing is that I don't have any money to give away. But if I did, if I were a cabinet minister like some of my friends on the other side and had the few extra dollars, you never know, I might buy a few more 6/49s. A 6/49 is something that's easy to do. You go to the corner store and say: "Give me two of those. Give me a \$2 Super 7." I can do that. It's easy. It's not a big strain on my pockets that are

not very deep, not as deep as those of some of the Tories on the other side. But that's the extent of my experience.

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The experience about casinos or anything of that nature is as follows: Everything is done to keep gamblers from leaving, on the mathematical certainty that over time, because of built-in odds advantages, they will lose. Fresh air is pumped in to keep them from getting fatigued, because you need them healthy so they can keep on spending their money. Lights are especially aimed to keep them on the table and off foreheads, which can drain energy. I have a high forehead. It would hurt me a whole lot.

It is designed so they can suck your money away in no time. You don't even have time to blink in a casino before you realize you've lost a couple of hundred or a couple of thousand, and if you're a big spender, a couple of — we're talking big bucks here. I know it's not just Tories who have got the pecunia to gamble who go there; it's a lot of ordinary folks who go there and get sucked in, while the owners are there slurping at the trough.

This government, through Mike Harris — you've heard some of the quotations from M. Harris when he was there in opposition a couple of years ago — this man, when he was there, said: "No way, José, not when I'm in power. Not when I become the Premier are we going to have an expansion of casinos. No, siree." But Mikey was in some fine cathedral at the time.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I beg your pardon, Madam Speaker. The Premier; you're quite right. I called him by his first name instead of "the Premier," the appropriate designation. His name is Mike, but he's the Premier in this chamber and you're quite right.

At that time the Premier, Mr Harris, was living in some fine cathedral, but now I guess that cathedral is falling apart and he needs big bucks. He knows, like most others, that the way to make money is to take it away from ordinary people. He knows that in order to finance the income tax cut — my colleague from Welland-Thorold spoke about this — that \$5-billion drain a year, he needs money. It's a \$5-billion drain a year.

He needs it to give away money to people. He says it's creating jobs. We argue that it's increasing the deficit and the debt. He's borrowing in order to keep the deficit high. He's borrowing so that he can help the top 6% of people in Ontario to make that \$2 billion that we want to take away from them. We want to take away two of those billion dollars that go to people earning over \$80,000 because we think they don't need it.

But this government can't do that. In order to continue to find money, they have to get into gambling so that these fine family values types of Tories are in the gambling game. These are family values types of Tories saying, "We're going to do it better." These are the same types who are saying — and you know where this money is going to go. It's going to go into the charities, places like the Kidney Foundation of Canada and the March of Dimes. The member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay said, "Even the opposition can't argue against that."

They are using charities as a cloak in their plan for the massive expansion of community-based gambling. They use charities, they use organizations that help the people out there whom this government is underfunding, in order to justify the proliferation of gambling in Ontario.

Would you want that kind of malodorous money hanging over your head? I don't believe we should. I really believe that kind of money, in the context that this government is conceiving it, is malodorous.

This government should finance charities and organizations that do good things for the public that is being shut out by them. It should finance those problems by general revenues through an income tax scheme that is fairer than what we've got in place. It is a much fairer way to finance what we in our society believe is important to have, what we believe makes for a more civil society. You can't have gambling be the channel by which we get money to fund these things. We can't do it. I don't believe we can; I don't believe we should. This government is using charities as a way to entice communities to say yes to a casino in their community.

It is also saying, "We will replace VLTs with slot machines." You remember, VLTs are much sharper machines. This is a slurping kind of machine. This is a machine that sucks your money away so quickly that you don't know it's disappeared. They are replacing the VLT not just because they know it has a bad name in the community but because they know this machine is a little more efficient in its ability to take money out of your pocket. So in April they announced, "We are replacing them and installing slot machines only in casinos and racetracks," hoping the communities out there are going to say: "Okay, that's great. This is much better than before." They are saying, like the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay said, "Under the old scheme those poor charities were only going to get 10%, while we're going to increase that percentage by another 10%," to make them feel better, to make them decide that gambling is okay because they're going to get a bigger take of the gambling money.

They're also announcing advanced funding for charities during the transition time until charity casinos are set up. However, it seems to be tied to conditions, including whether or not a municipality approves permanent casinos. We don't know, but if it's tied to that, it is using these fine tools — they're good on tools, these Tories — to try to suck in communities and charities to say yes to casinos in their communities. These are masterful Tories; masterful they are at this game.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): It sounds like bribery to me.

Mr Marchese: Of course it's bribery, but you need to bribe them. If in their communities they've said no already through the referendums they've had, what are you going to do? If you are the fine family values Tory Premier and family values Tories on the other side, you've got to come up with something to bribe the communities, don't you? Of course, because you've got nothing else.

Mr Pouliot: Slurping at the trough.

Mr Marchese: Slurping at the trough. I've got to tell you, there are a whole lot of people smacking their lips at the possibility of getting into this game. The member for Welland-Thorold already made reference to it today: slurping at the trough and some snorking at the trough. There are a whole lot of bucks there. There's a whole lot of money to be made.

But these people say, "Oh, no, we're doing this because we think we can do it better." The member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay said there were two options: shutting them down or working with them to improve them. I tell you, we could have worked to improve what we had instead of doing what you people need to do because you need the money. You need to proliferate casinos, not because having more is better but because you need the cash.

1650

We think the options were much more effective — by the way, I heard it from the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay — than to have what is proposed here by this government. What is being proposed here by this government will do the following: It will reinforce those studies that have already been done, and the studies indicate that 6% of gamblers become pathological and that 10% experience frequent financial and/or social problems as a result of gambling. The estimated annual cost to the government per pathological gambler ranges up to \$81,000.

Why are people worried? Why are municipal politicians worried? Because with the downloading of social services to the property tax base, to the municipal level, they're going to have to pick up the pathologies that emerge from this expansion of gambling, the problems that emerge from marital breakdowns, substance abuse and the like.

They know that when this government does this — and they have been cutting drastically in areas of need, in areas of social services that are required — and more money is needed, the municipality will not have the necessary dollars to help them out, because of the downloading of things such as housing, child care, welfare, ambulance services, public health. That will become an unbearable cost, and they're saying, "We can't handle any more problems at the local level." Municipalities are particularly worried about this. They have been responding in their communities by and large with a resounding no to these casinos, and it makes a great deal of sense to do this.

Imagine that the only economic development idea this government has is casinos. It's the only thing I've heard from this government other than their ideas that, "We, as a Conservative government, are opening the doors for business; we are creating the climate for big business to come and create jobs." They haven't done anything. The Minister of Finance hasn't done a thing and the Premier hasn't done a thing to create one single job. Jobs have been created because the economy is in a boom, but not because of this income tax money that he is giving back to them and not because of any grand idea that this government has come up with. Their only economic development idea is casinos. What a discovery that is.

Can you imagine going to the public saying, "We can raise about a billion bucks"? They downplay the number of dollars you would make out of this, because you can't tell the public you can make a billion or two, right? You can't do that. This is their economic idea: "We're going to raise approximately \$1 billion. Charities are going to like it, communities are going to like it, a whole lot of people out there are going to like it."

What a pitiful government we have whose only economic development idea is this. They have nothing else? Is this government not bankrupt if all they have is this? Maybe the next speaker can enlighten us on this when they speak next. They might have some great economic development ideas that we might have missed as poor Ontarians out there who are not as illustrious as they, not as articulate or as innovative as they. Maybe the next speaker will stand and say to me, "Here are some of the economic ideas we've got."

They don't have any ideas. They don't have any ideas as a Conservative government other than cutting services, cutting government, which is part of the ideology of this Tory government, and the other economic development idea is to give people an income tax cut. These are the ideas. You must admit there's a paucity of thought on the other side, isn't there? How can people think this government is doing anything useful for them when this is all we've got to deal with?

The bill, this new proposal, permits for more slot machines and replaces VLTs. You remember Bill 79 allowed for the licensing of up to 20,000 video lottery terminals. They said: "Obviously, the communities don't like it. We'd better eliminate that and give them more slot machines. That'll do it."

The only thing one can end with is to remind the public that gambling is, as Mr Stupak indicated in his quotation — I'll repeat it: "You can't disguise this industry. You can have Streisand, but it is what it is, and it's our duty to extract as much money from the customer as we can and send them home with a smile on their face."

I tell you, you might make them feel good at the end of that exchange of money over the tables or whatever else they do in those places, but when you lose big bucks, you don't go home with a smile on your face. You go home with a different kind of face because you've got to face yourself and your family, if you're in a relationship, and your children and deal with the devastating loss that brings. I am not for proliferation of gambling. Expansion of gambling is not the answer. It will be the ruin of many people. It will cause much devastation in communities when they have to find money to treat these people who become addicted, and I believe it does not contribute to civil society when the only thing this government has to offer is gambling as an economic development idea.

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough): It is my privilege this afternoon to take part in today's Liberal opposition motion, brought forward by the member for St Catharines, Mr Bradley. I think it's fair to say that this is a subject of sensitivity to each individual member, and I'm

sure a wide degree of opinion will also be expressed in that discussion.

At the outset, it's important to point out that our government is not introducing gambling to Ontario. Gambling, as we all know, has existed for some time. We currently allow bingos, and no one I have heard of has recommended the shutting down of Lottario. I believe any responsible government would want to make sure that gambling is done legally and with proper controls to protect our communities and indeed our children. We can't ignore it and pretend it doesn't exist.

What our government has sought to do is replace a system of roving Monte Carlo events that charities and police told us were not working. In 1996 there were 15,000 gaming days held under 4,900 licences. That's about the equivalent of 42 Monte Carlo events being held in the province each and every day. These events were taking place anywhere there was a large enough room to hold them. Police were concerned that these events were difficult to secure and to regulate, and they were sometimes set up in neighbourhoods where kids has easy access. We felt it was not a responsible way to do business, and we certainly had to take action.

Charities also had problems with Monte Carlo events. They are expensive to advertise and to operate. As a matter of fact, operations consumed about 90% of the proceeds, leaving charities with approximately \$10 million across the province. That being said, many charities have come to rely on Monte Carlo events to raise money, so we could not just eliminate them and deny communities this opportunity without some kind of replacement. When police and charities expressed their concerns about the hard-to-regulate and inefficient Monte Carlo events, we took that seriously as well.

Our government set out to design a system of gaming that would meet both the needs of the charities and the concerns of the police in the communities. We need to provide a controlled, secure and tightly regulated environment for the legal gaming entertainment, where the proceeds will be directed to the areas that will benefit all Ontarians: our communities, our charities, and yes, even our health care.

1700

Our government is committed to listening to people's legitimate concerns about gaming. When concerns were expressed about gaming in neighbourhood bars and restaurants, we listened, and we have announced that gaming will only be allowed at charity casinos and racetracks and certainly not in residential areas, as has already been mentioned earlier this afternoon.

When municipalities expressed concerns about locations, we agreed to respect their decisions on hosting the charity casinos. We recognize that many municipalities have gone on record as not wanting to host one of the charity gaming clubs, and we respect that. It will be up to the municipality whether they want to host a charity gaming club. If they say no, we will accept that decision.

We feel that our plan for charity gaming clubs will be better for all concerned. Charities will be eligible to

receive 100% of the net revenue from gaming tables and a percentage from the slot machines. Host municipalities will receive 5% of the gross slot machine revenues to address any increased costs to their municipality. The provincial share from the slot machines will be dedicated to health care, new money on top of our \$18.5-billion health budget. As well, 2% of slot-machine revenue will be dedicated to problem gambling.

This new plan will also be more transparent than the system we've seen in the past. We have mandated full disclosure of gaming revenue in the budget, in our public accounts and through an annual report that will be tabled in this Legislature. We have strengthened enforcement to end illegal gambling as well. Currently there are approximately 15,000 to 20,000 illegal VLTs operating in Ontario. As we know, in the past these profits only went to the operators and criminal activity. Not one penny of it goes to charities. The illegal gaming unit run by the Ministry of the Solicitor General has targeted these illegal VLTs and has met with success to this point.

During the transition from Monte Carlo events to charity gaming, we recognize that some charities may face difficulties. To prevent this from happening, we have announced \$40 million in advance funding to help charities during this transition period. This money will be recovered if and when the charity gets access to a charity casino.

Our government is committed to ensuring that gambling takes place in a controlled, safe environment, and we have taken steps to ensure that municipalities' decisions on charity gaming are respected and that the needs of charities are also met. The problems of gambling of the past are being controlled by the regulated changes I've just mentioned: only sites that are requested by municipalities, only in areas where adults are allowed, control of the past illegal VLTs, and the proceeds go to charities that benefit all members of our communities, including a portion to provincial health support and dedicated financial support to address problem gambling.

For these reasons, I believe gambling can now take place in a controlled way, and for that reason I will not be supporting today's motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate, the member for Scarborough North.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): Madam Speaker, I want to thank you very much for the opportunity to respond to and support my colleague the member for St Catharines on this opposition day on gambling. I must say first that, from the inception, this member has shown strong leadership in this direction, about the way this government is going about gambling. He told you over and over that it's the crack cocaine of gambling, where it's an addiction, and this government completely ignores it. I want to applaud him for the fact that he has brought this right to the forefront so that this government will have to address this today.

Charity gaming is gambling. The fact is that the nice fancy name you all would give it, close down to the bottom line, it is gambling and it's an addiction. Most of the

people who suffer from this addiction, whom you're extracting the funds and money from, are the poor. I would challenge any one of the Conservative members to go out to these casinos and look very carefully at who are the people gambling there. To say now, "We are a part of it; as the government, we're going to make it better," you know, is kind of sad. There's no new money coming in to society in any way. It's disposable income of the poor, who deprive themselves of other things in order to gamble, hoping that the big day comes in.

What is this all about? Why is the government into this? Why does the government want to be a part of this gambling? It brings money to the government. It brings money to the tune of \$460 million of all these proceeds that will go to the government coffers. In the meantime, they will then turn around and say, "We'll put some money back for all those who have been addicted to this gambling." All the crime and the policing that will be required to govern this terrible, awful situation is to say, "We've put some money back." But \$460 million — that's 65% of the net revenue — that's what it's all about. The same government that went about cutting some of the most important social programs for the most vulnerable in our society then turns around and says, "We want a grab at that money so we can put it back to those people," because they're getting the biggest cut ever.

It is the same Premier or leader that you have today, Mike Harris, who was totally against gambling. There are quotes, and I'm sure my colleagues have quoted many times what he has said. He has even stated that any city that is against gambling and votes against it, he will not put them there. But we have seen the reverse today. It doesn't matter.

One thing I can say about this government, they are consistent. They are very undemocratic about what they do. "It doesn't matter a damn what people will say, we will do it anyhow because we in the government are tough. We don't listen to the people." We see it in every policy they are bringing about. "We are right and everybody else is wrong." Gambling now becomes right for them, even if they had said before that they are against gambling.

I also want in my short time to quote some of the things that I have here, some concerns of some people around. Professor Kindt, business department at the University of Illinois: "For every \$1 that gambling revenue brings into the state, it will cost the residents between \$3 and \$7 in hidden costs."

Therefore, when we think that we are winning, we as a society are losing. We spend more in the creating of prostitution, of drugs, of policing. More money will be put there, but because the government can put their hands on 65% of the net revenue, they don't really care whatsoever. Again, why should they care? Because the people it has the most impact on are the poor, the most vulnerable, the ones who feel: "One of these days, my day will come in. I will put my \$50, \$200, \$2,000, the children's money for milk or the rent into it, because one day the big day will come in that I will win all this."

But the winner in all of this is the government that is reaping 65% of that net revenue. It is so vulgar, so immoral that a government that should be protecting the most vulnerable in our society is exploiting the most vulnerable, and then turns around and says, "What I will do, I will put it back in the charitable organizations because what happens, you then can serve those people in our society." It is the same government that, when people were struggling around to find food in their homes, tells them to buy dented tuna because that's where you should go. But they will still put in casinos and gambling in order to get their worth of the money.

Let me also quote another part of what was said by Robert Goodman, director of the United States Gambling Study that was done: "The average cost to the United States government for every problem gambler in the country is \$13,000." If you think about that, the fact is that the cost that we have to spend back on those who are addicted and the cost to manage all of that addiction will be more to us.

But again I understand that. I understand the fact that this government, if it was affecting the wealthy, would not do that. But there is no representation. They would say they're a vested interest who are —

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): You guys gave not one penny to addiction research, Alvin, not one penny. At least we give —

Mr Curling: I can see the minister, who's here today and who's heckling, who was part of all of this, who didn't care very much when he was community and social services minister, didn't care too much about those people, telling them to go and buy dented tuna. No wonder he's shouting today: "Damn the torpedoes. Let's go ahead and get that money and push it there."

1710

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Try to get some facts for a change, Alvin. A couple of facts help once in a while.

Mr Curling: The fact is, it's the government itself that does not care about the poor, does not care about those individuals.

Today, I would hope they would address some of the situations that we have in the Human Rights Commission that have been neglected, the cutting of funds there, the cutting of support for those people who need it most. Not at all. What they need is to balance, to pay down their deficit. It doesn't matter if the debt is huge, it doesn't matter two hoots. "We just have to cut our deficit, no matter how we leave the great legacies to our young people," and the young people here who are pages are watching and saying what happened, they will inherit. Many of you here will go back to school, and you should tell them in your school that this government has created a greater debt for you to pay later on and brags about cutting back on that deficit.

But the debt will be greater on the backs of the poor who basically feel giving them that little — dangling before them that one day it will come true, that they will win. They will not. They are the losers in our society

because what it has done is broken up homes. The addiction to gambling is so severe to families. It is a situation where it has broken up families, it has caused people to lose their homes, and then this government says: "It is fine. Let's go out and put it where we can get 65% of that net revenue."

My colleague from St Catharines has told you over and over that this is the wrong way to go, but you are going to surge ahead and decide that we must go in an extensive way to do all you want to get that money because you want to pay down that deficit. Mike Harris, who has emphatically told us that gambling has no place in his government, no place in his role, has today now moved ahead when he sees the dollar signs coming his way and has no care for those who will, as I said, be most destroyed by this terrible direction in which they're going.

As the opposition, we will continue to speak against that kind of an attitude. I want again to applaud my colleague from St Catharines for bringing this forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): Thank you for bearing with me as I was hobbling to get myself back into this place, Madam Speaker.

I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the resolution put forward by the member for St Catharines. I was going to say that I have a great deal of respect for him. I was going to say that I know he is a person who works very hard to represent his constituents. I was going to say that I know him to be honest and ethical. I was going to say that he speaks from the heart on this issue, and how conscientious and disciplined he is.

I was going to say that, but when I was doing my research, I noticed that in 1990, when the member for St Catharines was Minister of Environment, Bill 114 was passed, and he added "protection of the environment" to the list of lottery beneficiaries. He didn't object to the revenue from gaming in 1990.

I have to ask, when is gambling not gambling? Is gambling only gambling when it's casino gambling? Is gambling only gambling when it's not bingo or not lotteries? Is gambling bad in itself? I am not a gambler. I don't believe in throwing away my money.

Whether or not I think that gambling is morally reprehensible has absolutely no bearing on what we as a Legislature should be doing. It is not my role, nor is it the role of any member in this House, to pass judgement on what the majority of people in Ontario want to do with their own money. If they consider gambling or gaming as a form of entertainment, then so be it.

Durand Jacobs is a PhD. He's a diplomate in clinical psychology of the American Board of Professional Psychology and a professor of psychiatry at the Loma Linda University School of Medicine in Loma Linda, California. He is vice-president of the National Council on Problem Gambling, a charter member of the board of directors of the California Council on Compulsive Gambling and a contributing editor to several professional journals, including the *Journal of Gambling Behavior*. He has been involved in treatment, training of professionals, and research

on addictive behaviours for 30 years and has served as a consultant and adviser to several provincial government agencies, including the Ontario government-sponsored joint project on problem gambling of the Canadian Foundation on Compulsive Gambling, the Addiction Research Foundation and the Donwood Institute. I might add, when he was serving on the Ontario government-sponsored joint project on problem gambling, it wasn't with this government. It was one of our predecessor governments.

Durand Jacobs gave a speech on May 12, 1995, to the Ontario Conference on Problem Gambling. I would like to quote from some of the things he said:

"There are two predisposing conditions that are common to all addictive behaviours: physiological and psychological. The physiological level is seen as chronically hypotensive or hypertensive. These are opposites. The former is underaroused and bored. They need stimulation. The latter is stressed out all the time. They have to find ways to get down. The psychological factor is common to all addicts. Somewhere in their background were feelings of inadequacy, shame, guilt, or rejection by parents.

"People learn to become addicts.... You deliberately learn....

"You can't make an addict. We can do it with rats, but we can't do it with people. You've got to be predisposed before you can become an addict. I can't sit you in a chair and keep pouring alcohol down your throat until you become addicted, and the same is true with gambling and drugs.

"Addiction is not something that happens to us — it is something done by us. It is something that we carefully construct and protect and defend. It is a very deliberate problem-solving action."

1720

He goes on to say: "Prohibition isn't the answer. Tens of thousands of people drown every year and we don't drain the oceans....Where the high point for gambling addiction will be — somewhere between 1% and 2% — remains to be seen." I want to reiterate that — between 1% and 2%.

"That's where it has been holding, and chances are that it will hold in that range. It won't be a whole population becoming addicted to gambling. It just won't happen, any more than it would be a whole population going off into drugs or alcohol. You've got to be predisposed."

The critics of gaming make it sound as if there is a tremendous number of people whose lives will be destroyed by gambling. This government did not introduce gaming to Ontario; it was introduced by the former government. When it was introduced, the members of the NDP government, who are members of the NDP opposition now, supported it, and the members of the Liberal Party generally didn't oppose.

How must it feel to be a Liberal member today? Confusing, I'm sure, to be a member of a party that is politically bankrupt, not to mention probably financially. It must be very difficult as a member of the Liberal Party to explain to constituents how it was their party which had raised taxes 33 times in five years, compared to our gov-

ernment which has cut taxes 36 times in less than three years; compared to our party which has significantly reduced the deficit and is on target to totally eliminate the deficit within another 18 months to two years.

Imagine, if you can, when the member for St Catharines is put into the position on an almost daily basis of trying to make a case against this government's health care spending, trying to tell the people of Ontario that this government has cut health care spending when in fact we have increased health care spending dramatically from the \$17.4 billion it was in 1995 to in excess of \$18.5 billion in the coming 12 months. Imagine that in the area of gaming an additional half-billion dollars will be taken from the proceeds and added to health care spending, over and above the \$18.5 billion already budgeted for in the budget earlier this month.

I have often said in this House and in committee that the Liberals will not answer my queries about how they would have restricted health care spending to \$17 billion, as was proposed in the red book. I still wonder that. I'm still not receiving any answers.

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): You'll never get one.

Mr Wettlaufer: No, I never will. But maybe, just maybe, if the sun fails to rise and if the moon fails to rise, or if the moon is made of cheese, the member for St Catharines will come into this House and explain it. I hope so but I won't hold my breath.

It must take a tremendous level of mental manipulation to contend with the reality that his party would have cut back health care to \$17 billion while our government has increased it to \$18.5 billion, and also to know that it was his federal cousins who have cut the health care transfer payments to all the provinces, to Ontario, to the tune of \$2.1 billion.

It's very interesting. I was watching the CPaC channel yesterday and I saw the Premier from Saskatchewan, Roy Romanow, talking about the cuts in health care to Saskatchewan from the federal government and how the leader of the Liberal Party in Saskatchewan indicated that they knew where there was \$1.3 billion in savings that could be achieved in health care in Saskatchewan. I'm sure this is the philosophy the Liberal Party in this province is using when they say that they could have restricted spending to health care in Ontario to \$17 billion, that they knew where the waste was.

We believe that a good health care system is important to the people of Ontario, and that is why we would take another half-billion dollars out of gaming revenues and put it into health care.

The budget we have established for health care is the highest in the history of this province, the highest in the history of Ontario. I guess I'm somewhat proud of that. I'm proud of a political party that has formed the government and has recognized that while there have to be changes made to the health care system to ensure it's there for an aging population, changing demographics in our population, at the same time we have to ensure that it's the

best health care system money can buy. I am proud of that. I guess I could smile about it, but maybe I won't.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Go ahead, smile.

Mr Wettlaufer: No, I won't.

Mr Gilchrist: The world smiles with you.

Mr Wettlaufer: The world smiles with me if I do? All right, I will.

What's very scary about this motion that has been presented today is that the member for St Catharines says we are trying to force casinos down the throats of municipalities and that we are going to put them in the neighbourhoods. Absolutely nothing could be further from the truth. The Chair of Management Board has stated more than once that "no" means "no," that if the municipalities don't want the charity gaming casinos, then they don't have to have them. If "no" means "no," then just what part of "no" does the member for St Catharines not understand? The municipalities — let me reiterate this — that have said they do not want charity gaming casinos will not have them, and even those who have them, who want them — why would the member for St Catharines say in his motion that they would be placed in neighbourhoods?

We have been very explicit in saying that they will not be in areas near residences. We have been very explicit in saying that children will not have access to them, that they will be secure places. How explicit can we be before the member for St Catharines finally understands that point?

Mr Young: Fearmongering.

1730

Mr Wettlaufer: It is fearmongering, total fearmongering.

The opposition and the critics talk about the reception that gambling casinos, that gaming clubs might get from the public. Let's just look at something. This was a poll done by Environics Research Group Ltd in 1994 to measure Ontarians' attitudes towards video lottery terminals. It was done in November 1994, and 67% of the Ontario public said that the government should introduce new revenues in areas like lotteries and gaming. At the same time, 58% said that the government should increase taxes on alcohol and tobacco or reduce spending on social services and 42% said that the government should place tolls on highways. Sixty-seven per cent of the Ontario public said that the government should introduce new revenues in areas like lotteries and gaming. Interesting.

The Ontario Restaurant Association and the Ontario Hotel and Motel Association also in November 1994 produced the results of a February 1994 and a November 1994 survey on VLTs. This is the issue that the member for St Catharines was constantly critical about for the past three years. At that time — again, this is two polls — 67% of the population of Ontario said they would support lotteries and gaming as a deficit reduction strategy, and 77% in February 1994 frequently or occasionally played at least one form of gaming. In November 1994 it was 76%, obviously not a measurable difference.

The fact is that the majority of the public of Ontario considers gaming a form of entertainment. Whether or not

I like it does not put me in the position of being someone who should tell the public what they should do. I'm just repeating that for emphasis, and I may repeat it again before I'm finished.

The member for St Catharines, and the member for Oakwood as well, said that this government wasn't listening to the people. Not listening to the people? When 67% said they supported it, we're not listening to the people? What absolute nonsense. Over and over again the members of the NDP or the members of the Liberal Party always say that our government isn't listening. If we're not listening, how come we have said to the municipalities, "If you don't want a casino, you don't have to have one"? Isn't that listening? The police have told us about the problems with illegal gaming in the province, and we have here an idea which is aimed at solving the problems with illegal gaming. Is that not listening? I think it is.

The police told us — this is the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, by the way — after we indicated what we were going to do with the charity gaming clubs: "Thank you for taking into consideration the concerns of the policing community in your decisions on charity casinos. We are committed to working in partnership with the government to resolve issues proactively before they become a problem. We look forward to continuing with you on this and other matters as they arise."

We are listening. We are listening to the chiefs of police. We listened to them when they told us there were some 20,000 illegal VLTs in the province. We listened when we heard there was something in the area of \$8 billion to perhaps \$10 billion, but at a very bare minimum \$5 billion, in illegal gaming proceeds in this province.

We listened when the charities told us they were getting \$10 million a year. We listened when the police told us that the roving casinos weren't working because the charities were paid third, that it was the operator of the casino who was going to be paid first, and then the location. We listened when the police told us they had no real handle on the numbers or places where roving casinos were setting up. We listened when we heard that six out of seven days of every week in my own region in the past three years there was a roving casino set up — six out of seven days of every week in the past three years a roving casino. There were no controls on the roving casinos. There was no justification as to how much money the roving casino was passing on to the charity.

And we aren't listening? Madam Speaker, I hate to tell you this, but the members of the two opposition parties are the ones who aren't listening. They have their own views and they're going to ram those views down the throats of the general public.

Interjection: They're going to try.

Mr Wettlaufer: Yeah, they're going to try. It isn't going to happen.

We intend to find the illegal gaming machines, we intend to find the illegal gaming locations and we intend to shut them down. But we can only do this through a proper process.

We all know that we had some illegal drinking activity during Prohibition. Historically, everybody knows that.

Mr Pouliot: Demon rum. The great Satan.

Mr Wettlaufer: Demon rum, yes. We all know we had illegal liquor. What did governments do at that time? They decided to legalize drinking and shut down the illegal operations. Through legal controls, governments in North America have been largely successful, and that is exactly what we intend to do here with illegal gaming.

Is the member for St Catharines listening? No, probably not. He's probably carrying on a conversation with some other member in the House, but that's understandable; he never does listen.

Mr Pouliot: But he keeps getting re-elected.

1740

Mr Wettlaufer: The member for Lake Nipigon says he continues to get re-elected, but next time he's going up against one of our very hardworking, conscientious members, the member for St Catharines-Brock, and our member for St Catharines-Brock is going to be the elected member for that area.

It must be very disillusioning, very confusing for the member for St Catharines when he stands up and criticizes this government day after day after day for our policies and yet our policies are becoming more and more popular among the people of the province. It must be very disillusioning for him.

Our entire election platform from three years ago, which was formed as the result of three solid years of travelling around the province soliciting people's views, three solid years, we are carrying out the election platform. It has almost entirely already been done. It is meeting with the satisfaction of the people of Ontario. It is what they wanted. It is what the taxpayers of this province wanted, and we are doing it.

We are enjoying such widespread support now because we told them we would cut taxes to boost the economy. Have we done it? We've cut the taxes. Is the economy booming? Yes, the economy is booming: 341,000 new jobs since we were elected, 265,000 of those in the last 12 months. We are now, once again, the engine driving the Canadian economy. Economists came to the pre-budget hearings and told us that.

Getting back to gaming, even Jean Chrétien, the father of the Liberals, said that he is not a gambler. He's like me; he's not a gambler. But even he is not going to force his views down the throats of the Ontario public. Why would the member for St Catharines want to force his personal views down the throats of the Ontario public? Why would he want to do that when his own federal cousin, Jean Chrétien, has said it is not his role to do so?

We were told to reduce government spending, and we have. We were told to eliminate the deficit, and we've eliminated the deficit, almost. We were told to create a positive business environment, and we've done that. We were told to reduce the overlapping and confusing red tape, which caused so many problems for small business in this province, and we have done that.

My friend and colleague Frank Sheehan, the member for Lincoln, and the other members of the Red Tape Commission have done a tremendous job and should be congratulated for the job they've done on that Red Tape Commission. But it's never enough for the members of the Liberal Party or the NDP Party. I don't understand.

Mr Kormos: N-D-P. The "P" stands for "Party."

Mr Wettlaufer: The NDP. The member for Welland-Thorold has a problem.

In response to my friend and colleague from St Catharines, I want you to know that I do hear you. I hear what all the members of the opposition parties say. Our government hears you. We listen. We listen to your input — when it's valid.

Mr Kormos: There's the qualifier.

Mr Wettlaufer: Of course I qualify it.

It's a tremendous day to be a member of this government. We are going to eliminate the corruption in gaming in this province, and we are going to do that as we have improved the economy.

Mr Conway: I rise to join the debate that was initiated some hours ago by my colleague Mr Bradley from St Catharines, and in so joining the debate I want to support the motion standing in his name.

Gambling, and more particularly state-sponsored gambling, is an issue that is of increasing concern to people across Canada and the United States. It's hard to pick up a newspaper or watch television news in Ontario, British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, New York, California, Oregon, without seeing some community group, some ministerial association, raising concerns about the extent, the qualitative advance, of state-sponsored gambling.

Let me say that we've had for decades, in this jurisdiction, gambling that has been sponsored, after a fashion, by government. When I came here 23 years ago, the Legislature had just, under the very capable leadership of Robert Welch, introduced legislation to create the Ontario Lottery Corp. There were not a few Progressive Conservatives. Liberals and New Democrats who felt at that time that that legislation was the beginning of a slippery slope. We've all been in government over the last number of years and to a degree we've all grappled with this problem, not just in Ontario, but as I said a moment ago, in other jurisdictions.

My concern, and that of many of the constituents I represent in the Ottawa Valley, is the qualitative advance in state-sponsored gambling. That's my particular concern. We've now looked at the Ontario budget, 1998, and I was reflecting on this the other night, but I want today in the few moments that are provided me to draw the attention of the House again to the revenue charts contained on page 53 of the Ontario budget papers, 1998. If you look at the income from government enterprises, I will simply look at the revenues from the Ontario Lottery Corp and the Ontario Casino Corp. Those are the two government enterprises that provide the revenue to Her Majesty's provincial government.

In 1994-95, the combined revenues generated to the province from the Ontario Lottery Corp and the Ontario

Casino Corp were in that year \$947 million. Five years later, according to this budget document tabled a few weeks ago by Mr Eves, that \$947 million will grow in this year to \$1.755 billion. That is an indication of the extent to which our interest in, and our dependence upon, government-sponsored gambling is growing.

It also raises another question. Government is now not just the principal beneficiary of gambling, but it purports to be the regulator as well. I would say that represents a fundamental and unmanageable conflict of interest. We as a government, we as a Legislature, not just here but in virtually all of the other provinces and states across our part of North America are increasingly dependent. We are addicts. The public purse is increasingly dependent on gambling revenues.

I simply say to the House, that raises a very real question as to whether we should imagine ourselves to be a fair-minded and efficient regulator. I don't believe it is possible to, on the one hand, be dependent to the tune of \$1.755 billion this year and imagine, on the other hand, that we can referee that game. The evidence certainly, and particularly in the United States, is that if you look at states like New Jersey, when you get as dependent as we're getting as a government on state-sponsored gambling revenues, we are increasingly conflicted. Our legal and moral authority to be any kind of a regulator is increasingly undermined. I think that conflict of interest is something about which we are going to have to, all of us, give some increasing thought.

1750

It's not just that issue. I totally disagree with the previous speaker, who would have one believe there is no evidence to suggest that there is a growing problem with state-sponsored gambling. I was reading last year a series of articles in the Minneapolis Star Tribune, an incredible series of articles under the headline "Dead Broke: How Gamblers are Killing Themselves, Bankrupting Their Families and Costing Minnesota Millions." It's one of countless analyses that have been done in the United States and Canada. To take it outside of Ontario, we have all heard what has gone on in Nova Scotia, and if you have been to Winnipeg or British Columbia in the last few years, you know only too well the problems there.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): You don't have to holler.

Mr Conway: I am hollering, I guess, because I simply listen to a debate and it says — my good friend the member from Hastings, loyalist to the core, is standing up here and telling us that the government is really going to deal with the problems. Let me tell all of you that you're not going to be able to do it. The evidence everywhere is that when you get this big a player, when you get this dependent, you are not going to be able to do what you say you're going to do. There's no evidence whatsoever. I have talked to police officers, law enforcement officers, and they tell me privately that there were problems, absolutely.

I remember a very colourful story being told to me by an RCMP official about what was going on in North Bay 10 years ago, and I'm sure some of it was going on in my

town, but I'm telling you, I do not think that justifies the giant leap forward that we are taking in recent times around this Legislature and so many others.

Let me say something else. As a citizen, I am infuriated at the notion that I am supposed to stand by and endorse this, because according to these self-same budget documents, there's going to be in a full year \$480 million worth of in-year revenue to the health department. Let me say as one citizen, I don't want that kind of money if that's what it's going to take to keep me healthy.

I have been around this workplace long enough, and I'm not going to name names, but I'm telling you, I have seen with my own eyes in this very place, involving some very good friends of mine, just how ruinous is this addiction, just how absolutely wretched is this addiction, and I'm telling you, I don't want anybody to tell me that I should rest comfortably down at the Princess Margaret or at the Pembroke General Hospital — God forbid that I should be a patient in the coming days — with the notion that I'm going to be helped and made whole because hundreds of thousands of people are out gaming in state-sponsored establishments.

I've only been to one casino in my life and it happens to have been in Connecticut a few years ago, Foxwoods, which at the time was the largest casino in the eastern half of the United States. I was absolutely appalled, and I'm not here to be unduly moralistic, because I think Brother Wettlaufer made a point that there is certainly an aspect to this that is entertainment.

Again, the data suggest that for people with upper incomes gaming is an entertainment, but the majority of people out there are people with low incomes, and for them gaming is not an entertainment. The evidence is absolutely clear. Gaming for those people is the hope and the prayer, against all reasonable odds, that they're going to hit it rich like that fellow in northern Illinois the other day, US\$105 million, in some big jackpot, and for those people, let me tell you, for people of moderate and lower incomes, it's not entertainment.

I reflect on what I saw that afternoon two or three springs ago at Foxwoods. I'm going to tell you I don't want to live in a society that has as a tax and fiscal policy the premeditated measure that we are going to sustain important health and other services with that kind of revenue base.

People talk about tax cuts. If we want health and educational programs, we as a society should be willing to pay for them and we should be willing to offer the province and the country a progressive tax policy. The notion that we are going to be funding health and other services with this most vicious and appalling and regressive method of taxation is positively stupefying. I can't imagine that there are — I know there are many good family-values Conservatives around here, quite frankly in all parties. Do we want that? Is that the legacy we want?

There was a movie about 20 or 25 years ago, *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* Does anybody remember it? Remember the God-awful impression of these poor and

destitute people in the Depression and they were going out to these week-long or month-long dance-a-thons because that was their only hope and their only prayer of getting enough money to survive? I'm quite prepared to say to my electors that if we want quality health care, we have got to stand in our place and say, "We are going to tax for it and we are going to tax fairly for it."

I say in conclusion, what is wrong with a picture that says we want to reduce supports to the most vulnerable people in our community on the one hand, and on the other hand pick their pockets to the tune of \$1 billion to support things like the Trillium Foundation and health funding? That's why I support the Bradley motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Bradley has moved opposition day motion number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1757 to 1802.

The Deputy Speaker: Will the members take their seats, please.

Mr Bradley has moved opposition day number 2. All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Boyd, Marion	Gravelle, Michael	McLeod, Lyn
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Morin, Gilles E.
Brown, Michael A.	Kormos, Peter	Pouliot, Gilles
Conway, Sean G.	Marchese, Rosario	Ramsay, David
Cullen, Alex	Martel, Shelley	Silipo, Tony
Gerretsen, John		

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Amott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Ross, Lillian
Baird, John R.	Harnick, Charles	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Harris, Michael D.	Sampson, Rob
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Saunderson, William
Brown, Jim	Jackson, Cameron	Skarica, Toni
Carroll, Jack	Johns, Helen	Snobelen, John
Cunningham, Dianne	Jordan, W. Leo	Spina, Joseph
Danford, Harry	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W
Doyle, Ed	Leadston, Gary L.	Stewart, R. Gary
Ecker, Janet	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Munro, Julia	Tsubouchi, David H
Fisher, Barbara	Murdoch, Bill	Tumbull, David
Fox, Gary	Mushinski, Marilyn	Villeneuve, Noble
Galt, Doug	O'Toole, John	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Gilchrist, Steve	Parker, John L.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Grimmett, Bill	Preston, Peter	Young, Terence H.
Guzzo, Garry J.	Rollins, E.J. Douglas	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 16; the nays are 50.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being now past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1805.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Lundi 25 mai 1998

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 mai 1998

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SMALL BUSINESS AND CHARITIES PROTECTION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PETITES ENTREPRISES ET DES ORGANISMES DE BIENFAISANCE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 16, An Act to give Tax Relief to Small Businesses, Charities and Others and to make other amendments respecting the Financing of Local Government and Schools / *Projet de loi 16, Loi visant à alléger les impôts des petites entreprises, des organismes de bienfaisance et d'autres et à apporter d'autres modifications en ce qui a trait au financement des administrations locales et des écoles.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Member for Northumberland.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's certainly a pleasure to be able to address this budget bill, Bill 16, that certainly is recognizing the importance of small business in Ontario and also charities and the many volunteers in this country. This bill is about giving a break to small business. It's important that we give a break to small business because they indeed are the ones that create most of our net new jobs. Some people have estimated in the neighbourhood of 90% of new jobs are created by small business.

Unfortunately, though, some of the figures in Canada are that four out of five small businesses collapse within the first five years. That's most unfortunate. Their biggest problem relates to taxation. Taxation is the number one cause of why these businesses fail. Just imagine that if we could reduce this taxation enough so that maybe one less would fail in that five-year period, it would only be three out of five, and two out of five would keep going.

It's unfortunate that here in Canada we are the world champion on property taxation when it's measured as a percentage of the gross domestic product of this country. In a study by the OECD countries, when they looked at property and wealth taxes throughout the world, they came up with Canada at 4.1% compared to GDP; the US at 3.3% GDP; the UK at 2.6%, tying with Sweden, which is quite a socialistic country, providing an awful lot of social programs, at 2.6%; also Germany at 1.6%; and Italy, of

all places, coming in at only 1%. We could copy a lot from Italy in their 1%.

It's interesting to note that businesses consume only a third of the municipal services in their respective communities while at the same time they're taxed up to two thirds of the property tax for that community. Not only do they pay two thirds of the property tax, but they also pay income tax, payroll tax and other taxes. They're also charged extra for things like garbage collection, telephone rates, higher electrical rates.

The opposition has a great myth that business owners are rich: "Oh well, sure, they can afford it." Stats Canada indicates that entrepreneurs generally, on the average, earn \$15,000 less per household in Canada, and those entrepreneurs work 13 hours per week more than the average employee. It's unfortunate that many of these entrepreneurs are well below the poverty line. However, they're still required to pay the minimum wage, and in many instances they don't even earn it themselves.

The real problem here is that business and property taxes are still payable regardless of whether these entrepreneurs make a profit or not. It's most damaging to these fledgling industries that are starting out with little or no profit, facing things like unfair taxes. This is the very group that we're asking to create jobs and create the wealth in this country, yet we don't hesitate, at least the opposition didn't hesitate, to add on those taxes. Bill 16, which we're dealing with here, is all about recognizing those small businesses and doing something about those taxes.

We never see the NDP out there demonstrating on behalf of the poor entrepreneurs, but they certainly —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): What are you talking about? The member for Fort York was out protesting your tax increases all over the place.

Mr Galt: We're talking about Bill 16 and what we're doing with taxation to look after small business.

At the NDP convention recently, I noticed they were talking about abolishing tuition fees. Spend, spend, spend. They voted down any proposal to total up the cost of their election promises. It sounded more to me like a Liberal convention than an NDP convention. Alexa McDonough made the comment that electoral fortunes will improve when it shows it can govern responsibly. We saw what happened between 1990 and 1995, when we talk about governing responsibly.

The member for Welland-Thorold cited at this conference that they had political courage from 1990 to 1995. I would interpret it that they had courage to spend money

they didn't have. They didn't have the courage to increase taxes, but they had the courage to go out and borrow against future generations.

Some 70% of the firms in this country are small businesses which have five or fewer employees. Bill 16 recognizes these particular businesses, and we must, if we're going to have a vibrant economy here in Ontario.

Since taking office, there have been many changes that this government has made to encourage small business. An excellent example is in the recent budget. We are getting rid of the employer health tax for payrolls up to \$400,000, and we're moving it from January 1, 1999, right down to July 1, 1998, as one example.

I think it's important to point out at this point that the employer health tax was an extremely regressive tax.

Mr Wildman: Hear, hear.

Mr Galt: It's good to see that the member from the NDP really agrees with this. What we had was a tax-and-spend Liberal government that really upped the taxes in every area they possibly could. There's no question that all payroll taxes discourage business and they discourage business from hiring staff. The employer health tax was one of the best-known job killers this country has ever seen. As a matter of fact, it was high on our most-wanted list, and we've certainly looked after it. Next year, 80% of businesses will no longer be paying the employer health tax.

Bill 16 also provides municipalities with additional tools to protect small business, which reaffirms our commitment to small business in Ontario. Bill 16 allows municipalities to protect them from sudden increases in property taxes that may occur because of the fair value assessment. This is particularly true as I look at my own riding of Northumberland, and also an area like Toronto, where they have upgraded their assessment from pretty well 50 years ago. Not all of the municipalities in my riding go back 50 years, but certainly some, if not most, do go back that far. Consequently, there's going to be some tremendous adjustments and changes as we get to a fair level of assessment. Business owners came to this government and brought a clear message of change, that it be orderly and also that it be phased in over time. I'm pleased that, as usual when concerns like that are brought to us, this government listened and we responded.

It's important at this point to remember that businesses power Ontario. Businesses create jobs. Businesses build wealth and also generate taxes that help governments operate. Where would we be if there were no business to create those taxes? We as a government recognize and applaud that entrepreneurial spirit that comes in small enterprise.

Does the opposition ever ask where we would be without small business? I don't think so, because over the last 10 years, with some 65 tax increases, many small businesses were driven out of business. It's very obvious to me that they never really asked where we would be without small business.

1840

High taxes kill jobs. All we have to do is take a look at the Canadian left coast and see what happened when

Premier Mike Harcourt came in in 1991. They took the economy for granted. The economy was booming. The Asians were moving in with all kinds of money, particularly from Hong Kong. A typical socialist government increased sales tax, increased tax on stumpage, and on and on it went. Where is it now, after all that happens? Unemployment is at 9.7% while the Canadian average is at 8.6%. Business confidence totally plummeted right down, and in a recent survey of the Vancouver Board of Trade, 12% of the members surveyed, some 212, were in the process of moving their business from that particular province.

What about unemployment in some of the neighbouring states? Washington is sitting at 5.3%, Oregon is sitting at 3.8% unemployment and Idaho at 5% unemployment, obviously demonstrating what can happen when they really look after small business. Next door, Alberta has an economic growth of 5%, similar to Ontario, while the growth in BC is 2%. They say it's all because of the Asian crisis, but they were down actually to 1% prior to the Asian crisis coming, all relating to greedy governments after more and more taxes, and finally they just go way over on the Laffer curve that I've explained here before.

Small business Ontario is not asking for help. What they're asking for is fair treatment, and that is indeed what this government is providing. It's the work ethic of small business that makes Ontario and Canada what they really are and what makes them so great. It's capitalism that's working. The fact is that people work hard and are prepared to take less in exchange for the possibility of success, for the possibility that their business may grow and prosper. We're very lucky that we have small business owners in this province who believe in the Yiddish saying, "You can't hold your head up with your hand out."

There's further protection in Bill 16 as we look at capping at 2.5% all business taxes and property taxes for business. Of course, it would be based on the realty and business taxes of 1997. This would continue over the next three years. We're also looking at a transitional provision which permits municipalities to delay paying their school property taxes during this year.

I've received a lot of letters and a lot of calls from municipalities in Northumberland expressing their concerns over the transitional year and about having to borrow extra funds. Most agree with the fair, equitable property tax system. Many of them considered it, but it's pretty rough to bring it in in a small municipality. They're pleased that we did. It has been an enormous undertaking. Their biggest concern in this transitional year is the additional cost as it relates to turning over the education taxes. It's great to see that the Minister of Education is prepared to address this. He may allow the municipalities to defer the education tax for a reasonable time and, at the same time, may advance funds to cover this particular period. However, it is only going to be for this current year, 1998.

Looking at cutting commercial and education taxes, we've recognized for a long time that the business

education tax in Ontario has indeed been too high. As I mentioned earlier, we are a world champion when it comes to taxation measured against the GDP. I'm pleased to see that we're recognizing and able to meet a commitment to reduce business and commercial taxes by some \$500 million over the next eight years. In Northumberland that translates to being \$1.7 million in 2005, down by some 27% — a 27% decrease.

There's no question that high taxes discourage jobs. After all, tax evasion may be illegal, but tax avoidance is not. People in high tax jurisdictions have a choice: They can stay or they can go. In BC, in a recent Angus Reid poll of the Vancouver Board of Trade, they found that 28% planned to move all or part of their businesses within the next two years. They've cited high taxes as the chief culprit for why they are going to move. Some 60% of BC's businesses said taxes were the biggest hindrance to doing business in the province.

I think it's interesting to note that in the US, Dr Richard Vedder looked at the 10 lowest-taxed states and the 10 highest-taxes states from 1980 to 1988 and found that there were 1,000 people per day moving to the lower-taxed states and 1,000 per day moving from the highest-taxed states, all because of taxes, including property taxes. All these taxes drive people out, particularly the property tax, the toughest one for them to deal with. Also, in comparison of these two groupings of 10 states, the economy of the 10 states with the lowest taxes actually went up 20% faster than did the 10 states with the highest taxes.

Lower taxes create jobs. There is just no question that it does stimulate jobs and leads to higher tax revenues once you bring those taxes down. It seems that the opposition will never quite understand how increasing taxes takes away from revenue coming in. They keep talking about taxing the rich. I wonder who they think the rich really are. What it's really about is a brain drain and driving people out of this province. They are fleeing the high tax jurisdiction. We talked about some of the other countries and provinces, but here in Ontario who is leaving? Our physicians, our lawyers, our computer engineers are the ones who are leaving because of high taxes. First they get relatively low tuition to go through university and then they head for the low-tax states to practise in.

It's equally laughable when we hear the leader of the official opposition talk about increasing spending and holding taxes at the same time. I wonder how he is going to hold the tax line and increase spending. I think he's just waiting to get to that taxation trough as soon as we get the budget balanced. It's very obvious where the Liberals will go if they were ever to accidentally get back in and form the government again. They would spend, spend, spend; it would be the same old tax-and-spend government all over again.

There's no question that the leader of the NDP got it right at their convention that the Liberals want to be all things to all people. I think that recognition of the Liberal Party and the Liberal leader was interesting.

Just a couple of comments on charities: I think this is a great bill to recognize the volunteers of this country. It will require municipalities to give back at least 40% of the property taxes to those charities, and the municipalities may pass a bylaw whereby they can give back up to 100% of the property taxes to those charities. That is a real boon for those organizations and for those volunteers. I really applaud our Minister of Finance for having that kind of insight to recognize the volunteers in Ontario.

In conclusion, Bill 16 is indeed another example of this government's commitment to small business in Ontario, and to charities and volunteers in this province. It's also a commitment and an indication that this government is prepared to listen and does respond to the concerns of everyday Ontarians here in our province.

Business owners have told me that they are concerned about sudden hikes in their property taxes, because a sudden hike is obviously going to jeopardize their profitability. We've responded to that by limiting these tax increases for businesses and recognizing that, particularly for those businesses where there will be a very significant increase in market value assessment, there is no question that fair value assessment, market value assessment is the right place to be. It's paying taxes based on the value of the property, but there is an adjustment and we are recognizing that adjustment period over three years.

We're also recognizing the transitional year and looking at when education taxes have to be paid and giving some recognition to the municipalities. We're also recognizing that the education property tax on businesses and commercial enterprise has just been way too high for many years and through \$500 million we will be recognizing that over the next several years.

There is absolutely no question that other governments have failed to look after our small business, have driven jobs out of this country. This government, I'm really pleased to see that we are listening, we're responding, we're acting on some of the recommendations that are being made by municipalities, that are being made by small business. I for one, as a member of this party, the PC Party of Ontario, am very pleased to be able to support our Bill 16.

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Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I'm sure that anybody tuning in at this time and not knowing what this bill is all about would think that this is the best thing since sliced cheese. But what the people of Ontario should understand is that this bill merely corrects something that we have warned the government about for the last year.

We told them that if you go to a market value assessment system, if you take away the business occupancy tax and you don't have a plan in place, you are going to see tremendous tax hikes in some areas and we've heard it right here in the city of Toronto along Bloor Street and Danforth Avenue, where small businesses' taxes are going up from \$5,000 to \$25,000 while at the same time the big bank towers downtown are paying \$5 to \$6 million less in taxes.

What the government has had to do, and we've warned them of that, we've warned them of that for at least the last six to eight months, if you bring it in and you haven't got a plan, you're going to have to correct it. This government is involved in exactly the same thing that they were involved in so many times last year. They have to correct mistakes that they made when they implemented the market value assessment system. That's what this is all about.

The question that people could be asking out there is that if businesses are only limited to a 2.8% increase in taxes for the next three years, then we're not going to be in a market value system and somebody else must be picking up the difference that these businesses aren't paying. If you had come in with an overall plan to deal with the entire situation, this piece of legislation would not have been necessary.

Mr Wildman: I have listened with interest to the member's intervention in the debate. I thought I might learn something. Unfortunately, that turned out not to be the case.

However, I would say it's interesting that the member skimmed over some of the problems that the government is facing and tried to emphasize more what is happening in British Columbia, in Vancouver, of course ignoring the relationship that economy has to the Asian market. He mentioned that there were a lot of Asians coming in, but he did not really acknowledge the fact that the collapse of the Asian market, the problems in Indonesia and so on, have had significant impact on the British Columbia economy. I would just say the economy of Ontario is doing well right now, largely because of exports to the United States.

In Ontario, largely because of the auto industry, we have a relationship somewhat similar to our American neighbours that the British Columbia economy has to the Pacific Rim, particularly Japan and Singapore and some of the so-called Asian tigers. When you have a collapse of their economies, it of course has a tremendous effect in British Columbia. I hope this does not have the same effect here, but if we are to see the cyclical recession in the American market, the dependence we have on exports will have a tremendous impact here. If our American neighbours catch a cold, we're going to get a very bad case of the flu, because of our dependence on the American market.

I would also point out that the member did mention in passing that this bill will ensure that for three years there is not more than a 2% per cent differential in taxes. That just postpones the problem for three years.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Unlike the member for Algoma, I found the member's comments edifying and informative and on topic. I think there's always a very startling contrast between their comments and the comments from this side, which attempt to inform people about the contents of the bill but do it in the spirit of what is happening throughout the province, that while it's not perfect out there yet, the bottom line is that it's a heck of a lot better than it was three years ago.

As Spiro Agnew once said, "The nattering nabobs of negativism on the other side may have their day," but I find it very interesting that even some of their most ardent supporters in the media are on any given day coming out with fulsome praise for the budget, for this bill, for a lot of the things our government is doing. The Windsor Star, and we don't have any seats at all there, three ridings down there —

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order, the member from Windsor.

Mr Gilchrist: — a tax study showing that the average Ontario family is paying a lot less tax, endorsed by the Windsor Star. The Thunder Bay Chronicle — that's in another part of the province where we don't have any seats — is raving about the fact that, under Bill 99, we're now giving compensation to widows of former compensation victims. "Workfare Plan Quietly Scoring Some Success" down in London. "More Mine Inspectors Coming Up," also in the north, a place where, to listen to the members opposite, everything is going wrong. Obviously we're dealing with issues. "Mike Harris' Ontario No 1"; "No Tax Hike in Waterloo." More negativism obviously put to rest there. "Budget Points Ontario in the Right Direction." Here's one that was most interesting in the last couple of days: "Liberals Lie, NDP Boss Says." So in some areas we obviously share some —

The Acting Speaker: Your time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): Just coming back to the bill and the matter at hand, which of course the member for Northumberland was speaking to, Bill 16, Small Business and Charities Protection Act, I'm sure it has been pointed out that this is the fifth time that the government is trying to get it right with respect to this legislation dealing with property tax. They came out with Bill 106, Bill 149, Bill 160, Bill 164, and now here we are with a fifth attempt to get it right. If there's anything that underscores the incompetence of this government in trying to deal with a fundamental form of taxation that's been around since Confederation, it is this one here, and they still don't have it right.

All my colleagues opposite who trumpet the value of market value assessment, let me tell you the reality, because we went through market value assessment in Ottawa-Carleton in 1991-92. We're on MVA, and there were two lessons we learned from that, which are (1) if you leave property values to the market, then you drive out single-family homes in the downtown core when you need this kind of housing to make sure you don't end up with empty business ghettos and nobody there to make the downtown vibrant, because people are driven out by high taxes, and (2) you also drive out small business. Take the market area in the city of Ottawa, where we have these lovely little small businesses but still it's popular, and the market drives them out. You end up with large chains, people don't go there and it takes a while for all this to straighten out.

You simply cannot leave things in the hands of the market. There are other values, values such as keeping

downtown neighbourhoods vibrant, values such as keeping small businesses active, yet this government is going to give it to the blind hand of the marketplace and it will rue that when it hears from small business and cannot keep these things in place.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: I really appreciate the support that the member for Scarborough East gave my presentation. The member for Kingston and The Islands's remarks sounded like the usual rhetoric and "I told you so," and I listened to that. If they were so right and knew how to do it, I'm really wondering why they didn't do it in their term from 1985 to 1990. They had all kinds of opportunity to put it in at that time.

I appreciate the comments of the member for Algoma, but I think maybe he missed the point in my presentation about the Asians, that the economic growth in BC, the Canadian left coast, had dropped to 1% prior to the Asian crisis, so it was not the Asian crisis. They're trying to blame it on that, but it was all over and they were in big trouble by the time the Asian crisis came along. I can appreciate them trying to blame it on that; most governments do. But in reality, that's what it was.

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What happens traditionally across this country and many other countries is when an NDP or socialist government comes into power, it's automatic that they exacerbate another recession. We see this time after time after time. It's certainly happening on the west coast, and it happened here in Ontario as well.

I listened to the member for Ottawa West and he talked about this government trying to get it right. At least we're going ahead and doing something. We're moving —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Galt: If we can get it 90% right with the first attempt, it's worth going there and I think that's what this government has been doing. A little fine-tuning later on, yes, it may be necessary, but at least, as in a great slogan that the group Up With People often use, "Deal with it and move on." That's exactly what this government has been doing with something like market value or fair value assessment. We have been dealing with it, trying to set it, doing some fine-tuning, making some adjustments, and we are getting it right. There is no question.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I too am pleased to join this debate this evening on Bill 16. The member for Northumberland left a good segue for me to begin the debate and that is this issue of, are we getting it right? That's an important question because there is no doubt that no matter who the government were to be today, there are difficult and complicated choices to be made. I want to begin my portion of this debate by talking about what my colleagues alluded to, that this is in fact the fourth change in less than two years that this government has made. This bill represents an attempt to clean up their own stupidity, their own desire to go too far, too fast

without thinking through the consequences, particularly to small business and charities.

You will remember Bill 106. You will also remember the megaweek announcements of January 1997, the week we ushered in a new era in Ontario, the week a government that claimed to understand what it was doing began to reform the entire process of how we govern ourselves in this great province, particularly at the municipal level.

What has happened since then? This is the fourth cleanup attempt of Bill 106, the fourth time. The member for Northumberland spoke, I believe, with sincerity and passion when he talked about the need to create a climate for small business in this province that is conducive to investment and therefore job creation.

I wonder how it is you create or induce new investment when you make chaos out of the property tax system. That's what this government has done. They didn't listen in 1997. They didn't know what they were doing as they jammed those changes through this House, invoking their majority, in fact changing the rules of this House so that they could push their ill-conceived Bill 106 through the House.

What do we have going on in Ontario this week? In my community of Windsor tomorrow evening our city council will resume their budget debate, and I regret that for the first time in more than eight years, they are facing a property tax increase. Why? Because of this government, because this government has chosen to force municipalities to pay a greater share of the costs associated with those services that historically have had a greater percentage paid by the province, at least historically since the last time municipalities went bankrupt in this province, some 60 years ago. So in Windsor they're going line by line.

In our city we had a fiscal fitness policy that saw us reduce the city's debt year over year. Indeed, I was proud to be part of a council that actually cut property taxes in two years. What's really interesting about the chaos this government has created is that normally we would have set our budget in Windsor last December for this year, and as it stands right now, we're not even ready to complete it.

Anecdotally, Mr Speaker, I know you're aware that this bill is 80 pages long.

Interjection: That's all.

Mr Duncan: That may be all, but it's twice as long as the original bill it's designed to clean up. That's not good government, with all due respect. That doesn't create a climate for investment. That creates confusion and that creates property tax increases.

This government trumpets the fairness of current value assessment. Well, I can tell you, our community went to market value assessment in 1984. We had our assessments updated as recently as 1993, and I can tell you I have constituents in my riding, the people on Pierre, the people on Empress, the people on Westminster, people of modest means with modest homes, and they are facing 40% increases in their property taxes due to this government. And all the while in our community, many others of much

greater means are seeing great decreases in their property taxes.

We spoke about this in 1997. We talked about this in this very Legislature, and the very members who this evening are going to stand up and trumpet how good they are as a government are going to ignore the very simple fact that they didn't listen a year ago. They want to talk about 10 years ago or 13 years ago or 15 years ago, but you won't hear them talking about last year. You won't hear the member for Northumberland talk about Bill 106, you won't hear him talk about Bill 149, you won't hear him talk about Bill 160, because they were needed to clean up your mess.

This is a government that's raising property taxes right across this great province. This is a government that has deliberately chosen to increase property taxes. This is a government that has deliberately chosen to increase user fees. This is a government that has deliberately chosen to close 37 hospitals and counting.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Oh, come on.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau.

Mr Duncan: This is a government that has chosen to pick and choose the wealthy over the poor. This tax will hurt seniors more than anyone else. Let me tell the member for Ottawa-Rideau, the comfortable former judge, about seniors in my riding who have very modest incomes, who struggle to keep their homes, who are paying —

Mr Guzzo: They're paying Peterson's debt.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Member for Ottawa-Rideau, please. You're getting out of control.

Mr Duncan: — who are paying the legacy of mismanagement by governments going back to the 1960s, many years of which included Tory governments in this province, and Tory debt. The member for Ottawa-Rideau would much rather give a tax cut to the wealthy than hold the line on property taxes for those seniors struggling on a fixed income who aren't seeing anywhere near the kinds of increases that those people will see as a result of their income tax cut. So there's a fundamental dishonesty —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Member for Windsor-Walkerville, please take your seat. Member for Ottawa-Rideau, I don't want to advise you again to quit shouting.

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Mr Duncan: The member for Ottawa-Rideau preaches the fundamental dishonesty of a policy that favours the wealthiest over the poorest. Then they try to take facts and figures, they talk about the efficiencies created by this budget or by this particular bill, ignoring the fact that they're simply cleaning up their own mess, never mind what happened 10 or 12 years ago. Let's not complicate this debate. Let's focus right back on Bill 106. They don't want to do that. The member for Ottawa-Rideau would much rather see property taxes go up for senior citizens in my riding and in many other ridings across this great province.

The government would have you think they are the only ones who believe there was a mess, that there was need for change. That's simply not the case. All parties in this

Legislature have attempted to deal with the issue over the years, and all parties, except this, have shown some caution and didn't bring forward legislation they would have to change four times within a year of its original passage.

Let's talk again about the member for Ottawa-Rideau's priorities. He would much rather see the big bank towers in Toronto get a huge cut in taxes, 15% to 20%. That translates to \$5 million to \$8 million per year, and he'd still like to see the seniors on fixed incomes in small war-time houses get a property tax increase. That's what the member for Ottawa-Rideau wants, that's what he's voting for, that's what this bill is about, and that's what the bungling has been about right from the very beginning. So when the government tries to suggest somehow that they're cleaning up a mess, wrong again. For everything they try to clean up, they create more. So I'm not surprised, and I guess none of us should be surprised, that the member for Ottawa-Rideau supports huge tax cuts for the bank towers in downtown Toronto but won't stand up for those people in inner-city, war-time houses who are going to see their property taxes rise.

What about another principle of taxation; that is, responsibility? Mike Harris and the member for Ottawa-Rideau now set the education tax rate for business, so they're now setting 55% to 65% of the total business property tax. Even though he has said in 1997 that he wanted to have total control of education spending to provide equity, the government announced in early 1998 that they had decided to tax business at widely differing rates across the province. Again, more chaos and confusion. That chaos and confusion is what led to the 1998 budget announcement to spend \$500 million over eight years to lower business property tax rates to the provincial average. Again, they've got to spend scarce public dollars to clean up their own mess.

What do we have now? Is our new system of taxation clear? Is it transparent? No. This government has given itself the power to set those tax rates by regulation. That means no public debate, no local input. It's done by fiat, with simply a publication in the Ontario Gazette.

Again, we join with the municipal clerks and treasurers of Ontario, who called this mess overwhelming, absolutely overwhelming. We join with those municipalities across Ontario that are wrestling with the largest property tax increases they've had to foist on their unsuspecting property owners in many, many years. We side with those who say that the interests of the bank towers ought to be secondary to those seniors who are struggling to stay in their home on a fixed income and still deal with the mess that this government has created in the property tax system.

This bill presents us the opportunity to speak in general terms about the entire nature of municipal governance in this province, but we haven't debated and cannot tonight debate the full impact of all the other downloading and what it means.

What's really disturbing about the government's approach to this issue is that they're trying to pretend it's

not happening. They may think it's working, they may think they're fooling people, but they're not. People understand that this is not about fairness; it is not about equity at all. It's about redistribution of taxation and redistribution of expenditure, and it's about choking our ability as a society to answer the needs of the people we represent.

Fundamentally, this bill, as a first principle, is a bill that's designed to clean up a mess that this government created.

Secondly, it's a bill that's designed to camouflage downloading. The most odious aspect of this bill is that it shifts the burden deliberately, along with all the government's other policies, down to those who can least afford the burden.

It's interesting. We talk about property taxes. In our city, because of the government's failure to fund capital into health care, our municipality is being called upon to look at a special levy to raise money to deal with the two and a half hospitals the NDP closed, and now this government doesn't want to help our community come to terms with that reality. I say to the members opposite who haven't proceeded as far along this debate in their communities as we have that when your community goes to raise those capital dollars, don't be surprised if the fund-raisers have to turn to your municipal government as well to make up for the shortcomings.

There is no doubt that this bill is designed to clean up a mess, a mess that was created by this government. No doubt our property tax system had to be cleaned up. There is no doubt; all of the parties have talked about that. But we don't believe that creating a system such as this, a system that has 84 classes and subclasses with 156 tax rates, is an adequate cleanup.

We believe and concur with the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers that this bill and its predecessor, the one it's designed to clean up, is a recipe for administrative chaos. This is part of a deliberate strategy to create confusion so that people won't fully understand or be cognizant of how this government has shifted the burden of the cost of government down to local ratepayers.

If this government were serious about property tax reform, it would have taken its time and done it right in the first instance. Instead of jamming through Bill 106 and then the subsequent four bills, we might be dealing with one bill today that not only tried to clean up — and I recognize that's a complicated process — but might in fact improve the system. But no, we had to create chaos, and this bill is about cleaning up chaos. It's about a government that went too far, too fast. It's about a government that didn't think about the consequences. It's about a government that didn't think about who is paying the piper. It is about a mess in health care. It is about a mess in education. It is about not dealing with reality but dealing with ideology, a bill about cleaning up a mess — you're darned right it's a bill about cleaning up a mess, and there are a lot of messes that this government has

created that are going to have to be cleaned up, whether it be in the health care sector or the education sector.

There is no question that this government created this mess and this government has not addressed the mess, but the biggest mess that will be cleaned up is the mess that was created in 1995, and that is to turf this government and replace it with a government that's sensitive to the needs of the people of this province.

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Mr Wildman: I'd like to comment briefly on the remarks of my friend from Windsor-Walkerville. I agree with him that this is a government that is presenting this legislation because it brought forward some ill-advised, poorly conceived pieces of legislation in the past and it is now trying to clean up that mess.

Just as the member for Northumberland earlier accused me of blaming — I think that was the term he used — others for the situation in British Columbia, they are attempting to blame others for the mess they've created around property tax assessment. We all knew there needed to be a reform of the property tax, but this government said to the assessors, "We want to reassess all of the properties in Ontario, and you only have a year to do it," even though the ministry staff said clearly to the government, "To do this properly, we need three to five years; it cannot be done properly in one year."

As a result, there have been mistakes all over the place. There are going to be appeals — there are appeals — all over the place. There is going to be such a backlog of appeals, it's going to take forever to resolve this. It's all because this government was in such a hurry and it didn't want to do it right. When other governments amalgamated school boards, they took three years to do it in Alberta and British Columbia. This government did it in one year because they're in such a rush that they don't want to consider all of the ramifications and do it properly.

Having said that, I want to emphasize that while we recognize there needed to be a reform of the property tax system, overall we don't accept that this government is going too far, too fast — it's going in the wrong direction.

Mr Gilchrist: Unlike the previous speaker, I must take exception to the comments made by the member for Windsor-Walkerville, although I would agree with one sentence he used. He says all parties agree the property tax system needed to be cleaned up and that they have all talked about it. You're right. That's all you did: talk about it. You talked about it in 1990. You talked about it so late in your mandate that you then —

Mr Duncan: You're cleaning up your own mess.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Member for Windsor-Walkerville, you had your turn. Please.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Windsor-Walkerville, I don't have to tell you two or three times. Please.

Mr Gilchrist: In fact, you did it so late in your term, you then passed the buck to the NDP, and rightly or wrongly, even though Metro council and others brought resolutions to this chamber to allow market value assessment, they too dropped the hot potato. The fact of the

matter is that we have properties not just in downtown Toronto but in other municipalities across the province with assessments that are 50 years out of date because people like the member for Windsor-Walkerville didn't have the courage to go into those communities that were getting the deals and say: "You know what? Fairness means more to me than pandering to your votes."

Do we know that there will be mansions in Rosedale whose taxes go up? Yes, we do, and we knew that the day we all voted in this House, including the members who represent those affluent areas. You, sir, and your party didn't have the courage to do that. Furthermore, the fearmongering you've done in here, you know full well that every senior of low income —

Mr Duncan: You have no courage.

The Acting Speaker: I don't want to tell you again.

Mr Gilchrist: Thank you. That kind of thuggery is what I would expect from the member.

The bottom line is, you know full well that the law makes it mandatory that all low-income seniors and anyone who is disabled must be provided for, no tax increase, the first time any government has had the courage to do that too.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): First of all, I want to commend my friend and colleague from Windsor-Walkerville. I just wonder how many of those people across the hall have ever sat on municipal council. If they ever sat on municipal council, it doesn't show here in this House.

With the downloading that this government has produced to the municipalities, no wonder the charity groups won't be able to afford having their organizations going any more. They will have to pay rent to municipalities. It's true that the government has cut \$1.6 billion in taxation, the business occupancy tax, but charity groups won't be able to keep on going any more.

This government keeps saying it has cut taxes 66 times, but we just wonder how many times the municipalities will have to increase taxes to be able to continue operating. The government has come down with the transition fund. The transition fund is only temporary for three years. What is going to happen to the people in this province after three years, I really don't know. No one will be able to afford it.

I'm looking at the town of Hawkesbury: 800% increase in business tax. I'm looking at Russell: 625% in increased taxes. You just have to come down in our area. You people never did the planning properly. You didn't realize that the move you were doing would affect the rural area. When you do plan, please look at the rural area before you implement or introduce any bill. Definitely, small groups in the rural area won't be able to continue giving the service to the poor people in the rural area because they won't be able to afford it.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): It was quite the spectacle, sir, the member for Windsor-Walkerville in his usual eloquence taking advantage of a talent and trying to play the poverty game, which does not become him.

I agree with the member that Bill 16 is where you pick up all those bits that don't fit into the original bill, but there again, let's be benevolent, let's not be too harsh on the government. When you're in a revolution, you get tired, and when you're tired, you make mistakes.

What we have here is the unspeakable, trying to defend the indefensible. It cannot be done. They say on the one hand, "We will leave the contribution, the beauty, food-for-the-soul culture, and we will impose on the municipalities a tax break for arts, for culture." Yet when it comes to the budget, culture and recreation, in 1994-95 our government — the government past, alas — was spending \$408 million. In the interim, 1997-98, they're down to \$287 million. See the shell game? See what's happening here? One hand takes, rakes it in, it goes into the big vat which is the general fund, and the other hand dictates to local government to become more benevolent than the government should have been in the first place.

You're not fooling anyone. You've created fear, anxiety, and you will get the just cause that you deserve come July when the appeals start pouring in. Unfortunately, it's the people who will suffer.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Windsor-Walkerville, now is your turn. You have two minutes.

Mr Duncan: It's been a pleasure to participate in this debate.

To the member for Algoma, he recapped a number of issues that we have reviewed.

My colleague from Prescott-Russell spoke about the impact that this government's changes have had overall in terms of downloading.

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The member for Lake Nipigon, as always, in his eloquent and good-humoured way pointed out flaws in the bill.

The member for Scarborough East took on the usual role of sycophant extraordinaire, accusing us of thuggery. I'll tell you what thuggery is: Thuggery is jamming Bill 106 through this Legislature without full debate and creating a mess in property taxes. I need no lesson from that member on market value assessment. I was part of a municipal council that did it. I was part of a council that implemented those kinds of changes, and I'll tell you, we did it a heck of a lot better than this government's attempting to do it. We certainly didn't have to bring in four pieces of legislation to clean it up.

When that member talks about thuggery, I think about senior citizens who aren't given a voice by that member; I think about a government that's taking money out of hospitals and putting it into bank towers. That's what I think about. I think about a government that has changed the rules of this Legislature to stifle debate, to make it more difficult to get these points across. That in my mind is thuggery, and that is thuggery of the worst form, because they don't want to talk about reality; they don't want to talk about the facts; they don't want to talk about what they've created. They want to go into the past, the distant past. Talk about 1997, what you've done as a thug and a sycophant to this province and to the people in it.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask you to rule whether "thug" and "sycophant" are parliamentary terms.

The Acting Speaker: I have often said in this House that sometimes you get so close to the precipice that you nearly fall in it, but "thuggery" I would accept; "sycophant" I accept too.

Further debate?

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Thank you, Mr Speaker. If I could think of a sentence that put both of those words in it, I'd use it right now to just reaffirm your ruling. However, I must say many other words come to my mind.

Particularly, I must say that the comments of the member for Scarborough East raging on about how this has been a problem for 50 years and the two parties on this side of the House didn't deal with it — I just did a little quick math here, and for 37 of those 50 years, Progressive Conservatives were re-elected again and again in this province, and they didn't do anything about it either.

We know that the Reform-a-Tories over here like to pretend they didn't get elected on a Progressive Conservative ticket. They like to pretend that they can criticize the other two parties for the governments they had without accepting the responsibility for what Progressive Conservatives did over 42 years of rule in this province. They cannot escape that responsibility, because they know very well that the people who elected them thought they were like the Tories who used to rule in Ontario. They now know that's not true. They now know that this party bears little or no resemblance to the Progressive Conservatives who ruled for a long time.

You would not have seen any of the governments of those 42 years bungle legislation again and again the way this government has — bungle legislation to the point where they're consistently now having to bring in bills to try and correct the mistakes they have made. Why? Because they are so ideological, they are so convinced that you cannot take advice from any experts, they are so determined to push forward their view that they don't listen to the advice of those who try to tell them that this is a more complex issue.

This is a government that has tried to convince itself and the electorate that there are very simple solutions to very big, complex problems. Of course, when they trip themselves up again and again by all the things that they haven't listened to and haven't thought of, it becomes clearer and clearer to the voters of this province that they simply don't know what they are doing, that they simply think they can push through their idea of what should be without taking any account of the effect of that on the very people who will vote in the next election.

That's what makes this issue so important, because having completely bungled the download of responsibilities on to municipalities, having completely bungled in their belief that they could hide what they are doing by so much change so quickly, that somehow you could disguise it by taking back the educational part of the assessment

base and changing the rules about who's responsible for what, that there could be so much change so rapidly that taxpayers would be so confused, that the sleight of hand would confuse them to the extent that they wouldn't know who was taking what out of their pockets — that's what this is all about.

This government that prides itself on being taxfighters don't care about the ultimate cost to the taxpayer, to the person who pays the bills. All they care about is who that taxpayer identifies as the culprit, and they're very, very consistent in trying to make sure that increases in property tax are clearly blamed on municipalities, that increases in user fees are not brought home to them. They constantly try to tell people, "We've saved you X number of hundreds of thousands of dollars," and it's baloney and everyone in this province knows it's baloney. It is becoming clearer all the time.

"Baloney" rhymes with something else, and we all know what. It is the same kind of trickery around who is responsible for what.

Interjections.

Mrs Boyd: I'm aware that there's no poetic sense in these folks, so perhaps they don't actually know.

Mr Wildman: They think you mean Mulroney.

Mrs Boyd: I do mean Mulroney. You're right.

The reality of this situation is that this is a government that had grandiose notions about how much they could accomplish in how short a period of time; also a government that frankly cared very little about what the fallout might be if they thought they could make it a politically winning deal. The problem is that the fallout happened to the people who actually vote and now they're getting caught on the situation.

You can't tell me that the folks in the Ministry of Finance didn't know what the effect on small business was going to be of the policy that made this bill necessary. I've been in government. I know what kind of advice you get. If this government is trying to fool people and say that they didn't understand the effect of the original bill on small business, then they don't have much control over the bureaucrats or they don't know how to ask for the information — perhaps they've even made it clear they don't want information — that might make them think twice about what they're doing or they're not listening to their own experts any more than they are to those who are experts within the municipalities. There's no other way around it. It's got to be one of those kinds of things.

This government tries to talk about being a friend of small business and then they literally dumped a tax burden on small business, in Ontario generally but certainly in Metropolitan Toronto, that actually brought people who might have been supposed to be quite supportive of many of their policies out on to the streets in outrage, and so now they're trying to fix it.

The reality is that those small business people are also homeowners, so those small business people may see some savings in their small businesses, but when they go home and pick up their tax bill for home, they're going to say:

"Gee, it just went from one pocket to the other. They robbed Peter to pay Paul."

Mr Wildman: The same as the farmers are going to experience.

Mrs Boyd: Same as the farmers are going to experience; same as many people are going to experience.

The member for Scarborough East is quite right to say that this problem is greater in Metropolitan Toronto because over the years there had been decisions made in Metropolitan Toronto that were somewhat different.

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I too come from a municipality that went to market value assessment a few years ago. It was a market value assessment sort of scheme that really caused a great deal of pain for the very same people who are going to feel the greatest brunt of this: the people who are on fixed incomes, the people whose one asset is the home they own. These are the people to whom, on the one hand, this government is saying, "We want you to stay at home. In fact, if you need health care, we want you to have it at home," and, on the other hand, is putting policies into place that are going to make it impossible for many of those people to maintain that asset or in fact to have that home in which to receive the care. That is going to be one of those ironies that is not going to be long in coming across to people.

It's fine for the government to try to say, "We gave permission to the municipalities to phase this in," or to say to seniors, "You could always work out with your municipality some kind of negative mortgage situation in order to maintain your home." That's scant comfort to people who see the only asset they have being eroded over time and who face the prospect of living longer than they ever expected to live, of being in their homes trying to maintain themselves longer than they ever expected to be, and finding the challenge of that much greater than they ever anticipated it would be.

It's interesting that time and time again we stand here in this Legislature and realize very clearly that it seems extremely difficult for this government to put themselves into the shoes of those who are barely making it in this society. It's bad enough when they don't understand the plight of the very poor, but they seem not to understand that even those who are middle-income earners are faced with such difficulties in trying to maintain a quality of life, in trying to maintain their home, in trying to provide for their children the kind of opportunities they've always expected to have, and then finding that every step along the way this government has put barriers in the way of their remaining independent, of their remaining able to provide that quality of life for their family.

The worm will turn because those are the very people this government expects its policies to appeal to. Sooner or later one of these blows is going to bring it home to people that they are as much a target of this government as some of the other more marginalized people in this society.

It's really interesting the way this government succeeds in dividing and conquering people: trying to put the interests of small business ahead of the interests of home-

owners; trying to place the interests of charities in a situation that is almost impossible for them to meet; requiring, for example, that school boards charge child care centres full rent, many of those child care centres being charitable organizations; and then putting municipalities in the difficult position of having to choose between putting the cap on and rebating to charitable institutions the necessity for them to pay taxes.

It's a very, very clever policy of trying to pit one against the other, but it only works for a short time, because when people begin to understand that this is in fact a political philosophy, that this is not just something that happens once but happens again and again, they begin to perceive that they are being used in the efforts of this government to put across its policies while it manages to evade any kind of responsibility.

One of the things that's impossible for municipalities to do is to know what the actual effect of choosing to put a cap on will be, because they don't know what the assessment base is going to be. In fact, the ministry has made it quite clear — this is one of the most absurd things I have ever even heard of. How can elected municipal officials make the right decision when they are being told they have to make a decision on this cap before they know what the amount is that's going to be capped? It becomes so absurd that you could probably write a very good comedy about this thing, if it weren't so serious and if it weren't going to affect the lives of people in this province so seriously.

Under this act, the government has the ability to set and adjust, by regulation, the base on which this 2.5% cap would be levied. It could include the education tax reduction, or not. We don't know the answer to that. It means that they can't make up any additional tax room, because once they accept the cap, they're limited for any other reason. They can't make up tax room for any other reason. They're buying a pig in a poke, but then that's typical of this government. Most of the legislation that they've put into this House has been legislation that has clearly been designed to enable the government, without coming through this Legislature, to set by regulation the real terms of what will happen.

Look at what we're looking at in terms of the welfare legislation. So much in the welfare legislation depends on regulation. What did we find this week? That as the regulations begin to filter through to the municipalities, the municipalities are discovering more and more situations in which the regulations are forcing more and more of a burden upon the municipalities, or are forcing on the municipalities less and less flexibility to meet the real needs of the people they are expected to serve. This is pretty typical of a government that wants to shift the responsibility to others, because in all of these cases this government has very cleverly fashioned all of its plans so that they will be able to try and evade accepting responsibility.

I don't think it's going to work. I think you can try this once too often. If you make an assumption that the voting citizens of this province are not perceptive enough to

understand what's happening, you're making a big mistake. Because we have an articulate and a concerned population, a population that is prepared to change with changing times but is not prepared to feel as though it is being duped by the government in power.

It's very difficult to really understand how viscerally people are beginning to feel about the way they are being treated by this government. If this government tries to force through this bill without going out to public hearings that welcome full participation by those that are going to be affected by this bill, they will be very foolish. It will be another nail in the coffin of a government that already is known to be very non-democratic in its approach. It is extremely important that hearings on this bill take the time to hear from people what the effect of these changes could be.

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That helps people to understand that there is nothing in this bill that is not going to be controversial and that municipalities are being forced to choose between very unpalatable choices. They're being forced to choose between two different groups of taxpayers. They're being forced to choose that, knowing that they're very often simply shifting the burden from the taxpayer in one area to the same taxpayer in another area. It becomes very clear to people when they see themselves being, really, put into an impossible situation when it comes to making choices.

Municipal council members have difficult enough choices to make. It is not easy to be a municipal politician — a conscientious one, at any rate. It is not easy to balance the conflicting interests of the population, in any case. But when municipal councils are set up by a government like this government to take the fall for the decisions this government has taken against the urging of those municipal councillors, the worm will turn. These are intelligent, committed, dedicated public servants in these councils, and they are not going to forget quickly the fact that this government has shifted on to them a burden and an inflexibility that makes their job impossible.

Mr Baird: I listened with great interest to my colleague the member for London Centre. This government has pursued property tax reform, an issue that has plagued many governments. I think even she would acknowledge that it's a tough issue. It's always easier to sit by and do nothing, to just let a problem fester for years. I'll grant that her government at least got rid of the commercial concentration tax brought in by the Liberal government, which was a real problem.

Mrs Boyd: And did a thorough study of the tax system.

Mr Baird: And did a thorough study of the tax system, which is still gathering dust in the library across the hall, she is very right.

We are pursuing tax reform, and inevitably this government is committed to working with small businesses and with charities and listening to those concerns, and we indeed did take steps.

Just the other day, the member for Parkdale said, "To give the government credit, they've listened." I agree with

the member for Parkdale. That's what he said the last day we debated this, and that's extremely important.

Mrs Boyd: Maybe he should run for you next time.

Mr Baird: I say to the member for London Centre that we will not take the member for Parkdale off their hands.

Mrs Boyd: Neither would we.

Mr Baird: And neither will the third party.

I did listen to her comments that shifting from a commercial-industrial base with this 2.5% cap somehow would have an impact on residential rates, and that brought up the issue, in her judgement, of why the government wouldn't extend a similar 2.5% cap to residential. Of course, in the city of Toronto the tax rate is about six times greater for commercial-industrial than it is for residential, and that is obviously a concern. With multiresidential properties, it's three and a half times the residential rate. The problem is obviously far more acute for commercial-industrial. As well, the municipalities have tools, such as an eight-year phase-in, in previous legislation. As well, they must provide tax relief to low-income seniors and the disabled. There are some measures to ensure that these tax reforms proceed wisely and well.

Mr Gerretsen: It's very interesting that we've got a government here that believes in less regulation, in less red tape. Let me just tell you what the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers, in a letter dated today to the Honourable Ernie Eves, Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance, says about this piece of legislation. It says:

"There are over 25 specific controls and directions through regulation. This amount of administrative discretion is excessive. It leaves administrators and municipal councils without certainty. Many of the regulations needed are key in proceeding with implementation of the act. Any delay in establishing and publishing the regulations will place the financial stability of municipal government in jeopardy."

These are the clerks and treasurers who actually have to administer this law. It says:

"This bill is complicated, cumbersome, confusing and, too often, badly drafted. It serves to perpetuate the bad system that the government was so bent on eliminating. The end product is a political and administrative nightmare."

They are not my words; they are the words contained in a letter today to the Honourable Ernie Eves on behalf of the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario. That's how they feel about it. How much have you consulted with these people if that's the way they feel about it?

Let me just go on. By the way, this is a 13-page letter that the clerks and treasurers have drafted. They say:

"Few municipalities will be able to defend taxes for these classes when facing legislation that limits increases to 2.5%. Municipalities will face serious revenue shortages. If commercial and industrial classes are limited to 2.5% increases, municipalities will not be able to levy sufficient funds in 1998, 1999 and 2000 to pay for operational costs."

That's what our clerks and treasurers are saying about this bill.

Mr Wildman: I just want to commend my colleague from London Centre for her remarks, well thought out and measured in approach as normal, as she usually presents her views.

I was particularly concerned about two matters she pointed to: First, that municipalities are being asked to choose whether or not to cap the increases or decreases for business taxes without knowing what their total assessment is going to be. The municipalities are put in the untenable position of having to make a decision that might benefit the small business community without knowing what their total revenue will be and how it will affect their budgets if they do choose to cap. This is a terrible position for municipal councillors to be put into.

The other thing that struck me is that we understand that this government is contemplating time allocation on this bill, a time allocation that would prevent the holding of hearings so that the public, the members of the small business community whom the government purports to care about, will not be able to come and present their views to the legislators who make the decisions on the assessment process that is going to affect all the small business owners and the residential owners across Ontario and all of the municipalities.

This is evidence of a government that has made such serious errors and has made such a mess of this whole thing that they don't want to air the problems in public, they don't want to hear what the public has to say about it, they just want to rush it through and ensure that the municipal clerks and treasurers have to try to pick up the mess after they get it passed.

Mr Gilchrist: Always a pleasure, and indeed a pleasure to listen to the comments from the member for London Centre. I'm intrigued, though, that the member and her colleagues somehow think that this bill is not important enough, does not warrant the immediate attention of the Legislature and does not warrant immediate opportunity to give municipalities these extra tools. We know we've heard from the other side. We know we heard in questions weeks ago the fact that somehow the municipalities were being held up if they didn't have these new tools.

The bottom line is that the member opposite knows full well there is nothing more to be gained by you and I exchanging our views. We know you'll oppose absolutely everything we bring forward. The fact of the matter is, we know that municipal councils need these tools. They've told us that they weren't capable of handling the fact that the original bill allowed the creation of classes and subtiers. They knew they just couldn't handle that. Despite the fact that we had Ministry of Finance people sitting down at Toronto city hall, working side by side, somehow on March 26 the mayor, throwing his hands up, said: "There is no solution. I can't find an answer to this." Isn't it remarkable that the next day at 2 in the afternoon our Minister of Finance was able to present exactly what we're debating here today?

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These models had been shown to the city of Toronto. They knew what the options were. They knew that you didn't take money from the bank towers to just overwhelm the taxes being paid by small retail. That was ludicrous; it was obscene. The fact of the matter is, they didn't have to go through that exercise, they didn't have to fearmonger. Isn't it intriguing that all of the demonstrations were in opposition-held ridings here in Toronto? You folks are the ones who went out scaring the small business people silly. And for what end? Crass political gains. This bill is necessary to bring fairness back to property taxes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary L. Leadston): The member for Ottawa West.

Mr Cullen: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Gilchrist: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I apologize to the member. We have to go back to the original speaker, Mrs Boyd.

Mr Cullen: But you recognized me.

The Acting Speaker: Well, I de-recognize you. We're going back to the original speaker.

Mr Cullen: I don't know how you can do that, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I apologize to the member.

Mrs Boyd: And I apologize to the Speaker because I miscounted too and I think I mislead the member for Ottawa West, so I beg your pardon.

I appreciate the comments from my colleagues and I'd like to respond a bit to the comments by the member for Scarborough East because, as usual, he gets up and skews the issues in such a way as to suit his own ends. The member is trying very hard to pretend there is no issue here. He is trying very hard to pretend that this government didn't bungle this whole issue. He is trying very hard to pretend that the Minister of Finance did not have to respond to the issue because he was forced to respond to the issue as a result of the anger on the part of council members and on the part of citizens of Toronto.

The member likes to talk about: "We weren't trying to shift the burden from the bank towers on to small business. We always intended to do something like that." No one believes that, because if they'd always intended to it, they would have done it from the beginning.

He also tends to gloss over the fact that the so-called solution to this problem simply moves the burden of taxation from the bank towers on to the homeowners, not really a very good solution. By the time all this playing around about responsibility is through, what we are going to see is yet another shift of the burdens of taxation to those who can least afford it from those who can best afford it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I will turn my remarks to the subject of Bill 16 in just a moment, but with the indulgence of the House, I want to mention that this is the first occasion I have had to speak in public since the Victoria Day weekend, which saw the loss of two exceptional young girls from my community. I represent a community which is still recovering from the grief of that

event. I want the families of Carrie Evans and Theresa Pierrynowski to know that they are not alone in their grief and that the thoughts of an entire community are with them at this time.

We are here tonight to discuss Bill 16 and from the debate which has gone on so far this evening there might be some confusion as to what the subject matter of Bill 16 is and just what Bill 16 is all about, so I thought I might take a few moments to bring to bear some perspective on just what Bill 16 is about. Of course, what Bill 16 is about is political courage. We have already heard from the member for Windsor-Walkerville that the matter of property tax and the need for reform is a subject that has been talked about for years in this place. It's quite true that it has been talked about for years in this place, much as Mark Twain commented on the weather, "Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it." That has pretty much been the story on property tax reform in this province in recent years.

The system that we have for property tax in this province was not always in need of reform, was not always out of date. When it was put in place, of course it was current, but by 15 years ago it was clearly out of date in some communities. Certainly in my community in Toronto it was vastly out of date. Since that time a succession of governments have had an opportunity to address the matter.

The first Peterson government had an opportunity to address the matter, but did they do anything about it? No, they didn't. What did they do in their first two years of office? In their first two years of office they did what they were told by the NDP. That's what the Peterson government did for its first two years in office. I might mention that those were the Peterson government's finest years in office, when it was its most dramatic, most dynamic, most active and most prolific. As soon as the accord with the NDP expired and Mr Peterson had his opportunity, he called an election and was returned with a majority, a clear opportunity to set his own agenda. Did the Peterson government use that opportunity to address the issues of property tax and the need to reform the property tax system? No, they didn't.

The Peterson government, for those three years when they had the opportunity to set their own agenda, when they had the mandate to govern this government, didn't do much of anything. When they had to think for themselves and when they didn't have the NDP to pull their strings for them and to tell them what to do and to spoon-feed their legislation to them, they were bereft of ideas. So they sat and did virtually nothing for three years and then, when the opportunity was right, when the public opinion polls looked favourable — translation, Mr Speaker: when the public had pretty much forgotten Patti Starr and a lot of the electorate was presumed to be not paying much attention — Mr Peterson called a snap summer election. He didn't have to do it. He could have dealt with the pressing issues of the day. He could have dealt with the need to reform property tax.

The member for Windsor-Walkerville, a member of the opposition caucus here today, says, and I agree with him,

that this is an issue that has been talked about for years and people have been aware of it for years, but the Peterson government ignored it, took no action on it. Instead they called a snap election.

I don't want to suggest they did absolutely nothing during those years. They did raise taxes — how many? — 33 times. They did manage to raise taxes 33 times in their years in office. They did manage to introduce new taxes like the commercial concentration tax. They did manage to do that. So those Liberal years were not years of accomplishment —

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere):

And didn't they have roving casinos at the same time?

Mr Parker: I'm reminded by my friend from Scarborough that they also managed to introduce roving casinos during their years in office. So it's not that they did absolutely nothing, and I shouldn't misrepresent the record. But did they take any action on the need to reform property tax, which the member for Windsor-Walkerville says was clearly in need of reform at that time? No, they did not.

The result of the summer election of 1990 we all know. Mr Peterson got the result that he deserved. I'm afraid the people of Ontario didn't get the result that they deserved, however, and we were introduced to what became five years of NDP government. Did they address the issue of property tax reform? Yes, they did. Well, they tried. They did take some steps towards addressing the need to update the system, but I wouldn't recommend the approach that they took. As soon as the going got tough, the Bob Rae government collapsed on the issue and they withdrew their initiative to bring the property tax system up to date.

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Did they run out of time in their mandate to take another run at it? Did they run out of time to correct the errors of their initial attempt and to bring about the reform that was needed in a more thoughtful, more appropriate way? No, they did not run out of time. In their last year in office, how many days did the Legislature sit? The Legislature sat 19 days in the last year of the Bob Rae government. Did they run out of time to bring about the necessary legislative change? No, they were stuck like a deer in the headlights, waiting in vain for the public opinion polls to turn, and they never did. Eventually they did run out of time. The inevitable election of 1995 was called and finally, this time, a government was elected into office with a clear mandate, a clearly defined program of reform, including reform across the board, which is exactly what the people of this province knew was required.

This government now sets about the difficult and challenging task of reforming the property tax system. Is that an easy thing to do? If it was easy, maybe the Peterson government could have done it in the two terms they had in office. But no, they saw it was going to be difficult and they backed off. The NDP might have done it, but they saw it was going to be difficult and they backed off. It's not going to be an easy thing to do to reform the property tax system in this province. But in an act of political courage — and we have heard that not everyone is happy

with all aspects of the reform package, because of course change is difficult and those who have benefited from the status quo are not enthusiastic about seeing those benefits removed from them — that change is going to occur and it's about time it did occur in this province. It's going to lead to a more stable, more fair, more defensible, more transparent property tax system.

We've heard that there were some problems with the initial proposal, and I'm not going to suggest that there haven't been some problems with the initial proposal. I've certainly heard from my constituents their concerns about some aspects of the initial proposal. I was at the Donlands diner when I met with many of the small business operators who were concerned that if there was an immediate and unmitigated shift from the old property tax regime to the proposed new property tax regime, there was the potential that those small businesses might see tax increases of an abnormal amount and it would be difficult for them to absorb those increases.

I also met with the south Leaside business association at Original's diner. There was a large group there and we were met by the leaders of the business association of south Mount Pleasant. We discussed the concerns of those people over the same issue, similar concerns. I met with the Leaside business park association. I met with my colleague from High Park-Swansea with Bloor West Village, the business improvement association. We heard their concerns about the potential effect of an immediate shift from the status quo to the proposed new tax regime.

My colleagues from the Toronto area and elsewhere in the province were aware of these concerns. We listened to our constituents. In the Toronto area, the Toronto government caucus, under the leadership of the member for High Park-Swansea, met immediately and we asked for an opportunity to meet with the Minister of Finance and discuss these concerns with him, to bring the concerns of our constituents directly to the attention of the Minister of Finance. He agreed to meet with us. We met with him at length and discussed at length the concerns that we had for our constituents, and we discussed proposals for how those concerns might usefully be addressed. We also had a meeting with the Premier and discussed with him the concerns that had been brought to bear. We discussed approaches to address those concerns.

In parallel with these efforts on the part of the caucus, the minister immediately dispatched his senior staff to meet with the financial staff of the city of Toronto and to discuss with them directly how current value assessment might be implemented in the Toronto area and how the effects, where they were unacceptable, might be usefully and effectively mitigated. Those meetings between the senior finance staff and the city staff, and the meetings between the Toronto caucus and the minister and the Premier, led to the result, which was announced by the minister in a small restaurant on the Danforth earlier this spring, shortly after a meeting between the Premier and the mayor. The minister at that time announced the theme behind the bill we are here debating today, Bill 16.

The bill includes a number of features, but the critical feature that I'm going to comment on tonight is the option

that the bill grants to municipalities throughout the province, the municipal option. Where there is potential that a shift to current value assessment may result in unacceptably high shifts in the tax burden among the commercial and industrial taxpayers, those municipalities have the option to limit the effects of the conversion to current value assessment to no more than 2.5% of the 1997 tax bill. In short, where a municipality chooses to do so, it can assure its businesses that their taxes will not go up by more than 2.5% as a result of the conversion from the old tax regime to the new tax regime. The concern that was brought to bear was that taxes might go up by 50% or 100% in some cases, and there were some instances where there was concern suggested that they would go up by over 100%. The result of Bill 16 is to assure that no commercial or industrial taxes will go up by more than 2.5%.

There were concerns that were also brought to bear on other matters. For example, as part of the property tax reform package, the province met with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, AMO, and we heard from them what their concerns were over the old tax regime. One of those concerns was that the business occupancy tax, which had been in place in this province for many, many years, was outdated and not useful, a very expensive tax to collect and a tax that the cities had a very low success rate in collecting. About 40% of the value that was taxed was never recovered. A great deal of municipal effort was expended in trying to collect that 40% from taxpayers that simply evaded that tax. They told us, "This is not a very good tax." They wanted it gone. So this government removed that tax.

One of the byproducts of removing the business occupancy tax was that the burden on landlords, on their regular tax rates, went up commensurately. As the tax came off the business occupancy tax base, it went on the regular real estate tax base, and for landlords, who paid the tax, this meant their tax burden went up accordingly. This was not a problem for landlords with net leases, those landlords who could pass that tax back down to their tenants, the tenants who were the businesses which ostensibly paid the business occupancy tax in the first place. That was virtually a straight swap of business occupancy tax for a commensurate increase in the real property tax. But where there was a difficulty was in the case of landlords with gross leases, landlords who did not have the option of passing the increased property tax down to their business tenants. This bill addresses that issue as well and it permits landlords with gross leases to pass any increase in their property tax arising from the removal of the business occupancy tax down to their business tenants.

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There's one other concern that I have heard from my constituents in Toronto on the subject of property tax, and that is the abnormally high business education tax paid in the city of Toronto. I know that my colleague from Nepean, representing the Ottawa area, faces a similar situation where their businesses pay a higher education tax than business taxpayers elsewhere in the province. This is a historical reality. This is a situation that has existed for

many years, as those communities have had very high education costs and those costs have been borne by the property taxpayers of those municipalities, and the municipalities have put an abnormal portion of that tax burden on to their business taxpayers.

The province, as we have heard in this House, has stopped the spiralling increase in education tax. The provincial government has taken the capacity to tax away from the school boards and has taken on itself the authority to set property taxes for education, both in the residential area and in the commercial and industrial area. People have been saying to us all of a sudden, "Now that you're in control of the tax system, how is it you are allowing the commercial taxpayers in Toronto and the commercial taxpayers in Ottawa to continue paying a higher education tax than business taxpayers elsewhere in the province?" The shift from the old system to the new system was difficult to make all in one shot. We weren't sure that it would be possible to equalize business taxes all at once, and frankly, we can't equalize business taxes all at once. If we were to equalize business taxes simply by increasing the rate on business taxpayers elsewhere in the province so that we could reduce the education tax rates on businesses in Toronto and Ottawa, that would put vast communities out of business overnight, as their taxes would rise astronomically to compensate for the reduction in the education taxes on Toronto businesses. That's merely a reflection of how abnormally high education business taxes in Toronto have been for these many years.

In the budget recently read by the Minister of Finance, he announced that this government is going to set about rectifying even that issue. In the current years there will be a reduction in business education taxes out of provincial revenues. In the Toronto and Ottawa areas and other areas where taxes are above the provincial average, those taxes will come down by \$64 million. In 1999 the taxes will come down by a further \$128 million, and over the balance, the ensuing six-year period, the business education taxes in those areas where business education taxes are currently higher than the provincial average will be brought to exactly the provincial average.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Ottawa West.

Mr Cullen: Mr Speaker, as you know, Ottawa West is the best, and that's how you will remember it, I'm sure, for next time.

I am delighted to stand up in response to the member for York East. I won't say anything about York East, but I do want to comment on the fact that he has spent a lot of time talking about the origins of this bill and what this bill is trying to resolve. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I'm sure Hansard got it correct that because of the previous bills, Bills 106, 149, 160 and 164, that this government brought in just last year — did I not hear him correctly say that there might have been tax increases of 50%, 100%, 150%, and as a result of that, they had to bring in this legislation to correct these excessive tax increases brought about by their own legislation? Would this not teach somebody that perhaps they've zigged and zagged and simply gone too far?

You have to remember that this is all happening in the context of municipal downloading. In the one instance the member says they've listened to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, but when it comes to downloading, where we see nearly \$3 billion worth of services landing bang on the property tax base and we see the municipalities struggling to deal with it and then we have property tax reform, not one bill but one, two, three, four, five of them, and then we have all these sudden tax increases going on all over the place, no wonder this government is scrambling and scrambling like crazy to try and make things balance.

But it's all a huge smokescreen because here the municipalities are dealing with the elimination of the business occupancy tax and the downloading of health services and social assistance and social housing and all these things, and what do they have here? They've got a bill that has 84 classes of property taxes, subclasses, up to 156 tax rates, on and on and on. It's a mess and they can't get it right.

Mr Pouliot: I must congratulate the member for York East on at least an attempt to put the best face, the best visage, on what is really a menu of misery. He took the better part of 20 minutes, and I can see why, hiding his embarrassment to name-drop, to tell us about anywhere from la Maison du Egg Roll, where Trudeau made a famous declaration at one time, to the downtown diner, and then said, "We presented our findings to the Minister of Finance himself, and the Minister of Finance immediately granted us the pleasure, the privilege, of an audience" — a member from his own party.

What he omitted to talk about is this menu, what it entails, that once you embark on an exercise of freezing taxes for three years, regardless of what the government has in mind, in future, more downloading, a dislocation in your welfare recipient rate, and you don't have the ability to respond by way of assessment nor by way of taxes. What he did say is it's not only assessment and reassessment, it's the downloading exercise, it's the compression of the fiscal year. We're five months into our municipal fiscal year and yet we don't have answers to more than 50% of our questions when it comes to assessment, when it comes to appeal process. Oh, sure, it's been pushed back to July 31 — of small consolation.

This group of people has chosen to go with action directe. They will carry the guilt. This is a five-year exercise, step by step? No, they've shoved things down people's throats. They will do so at their own peril.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It is a real pleasure to get up and acknowledge the member for York East's insightful comments. I know just how hard he works for his riding of York East, and he's demonstrated here tonight on about three separate occasions during his remarks that he's effectively listening to his constituents, small business and the small taxpayer of Ontario.

I think the member for York East reflects a lot of what I'm hearing around Ontario. In fact, if I could just comment, with the permission of the Chair, the member for Yorkview, a Liberal member, was quoted in Hansard

— I'm reading it here — saying, "I will give this government credit; they listen." I could go on.

I think this is what this bill is all about. The bill is really trying to achieve balance, and the balance has been missing. There's no question that with the two previous bills on municipal finance, 106 and 149, the government has taken the difficult step of reforming the system. I can tell you that in my time as chair of finance for the municipality I was elected to represent before my time here, on the tax problem, AMO — the member for Kingston and The Islands would know they've all been asking for the change for years. What's different with this government? We've not only listened and studied; we're going ahead and making the changes.

Just in the few remaining moments I have, two small portions of this bill. On the business occupancy tax, an outdated form of tax, that solution has been long overdue and long required.

But I think a more thematic vein of the current theme of this government is the acknowledgement of the problem it was for the local charities. For the viewer today, it's important to recognize that charities were going to be taxed like businesses. There are provisions in here to overcome that problem.

2030

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): This is the gang that can't shoot straight. This is a bill that has come in after two bills from just last year, just a few months back, that just didn't get it right.

This government loves these long titles to their bills. The title of this bill should be: Whoops, We Didn't Get It Right Last Time, So We'd Better Make the Changes to the Local Taxation in Order to Save Our You Know What, because all hell was breaking loose in the city of Toronto here. Small business people, who should be the natural constituency of this government, were having an uprising. I thought it was the Mackenzie rebellion all over again coming down Yonge Street. What this government had done to small business people in Toronto and in Ottawa was absolutely incredible. This is like you're trying to rebuild a building without any plans here, so you strike out on two bills last year. The fundamental mistakes of this government have just been horrendous, and this bill here is to correct them.

Really the crux of the matter is that while you can bring about some incredible change, you people can't manage. The Mike Harris government cannot manage. The change is coming so quickly, you're not managing. If there's anything the people of Ontario do not want to see in their government, it is the inability to manage, and that's what's happening. We've had several examples of that. We've had bills before us in the House that are amending bills still before us in the House.

I have never in my life, in my history in this House, seen a government so inept, so incompetent, as this Mike Harris government. That's the problem here. That's why we're going to be debating this bill all week to at least try to save the small business owners in Toronto and other urban centres that basically were at risk of being put out

of business by the Mike Harris government. A government that should be looking after small business, this government was going to raise taxation and put those businesses out of business. This bill is going to change that and make sure those businesses survive.

Mr Parker: I want to thank my colleagues the members for Ottawa West, Lake Nipigon, Durham East and Timiskaming for their remarks.

I think in his remarks the member for Ottawa West underscored the difficulty and complexity of trying to bring about change in this field. He itemized the degree of detailed work that is necessary to take us from where we have been in the field of property tax to where we must be. He comments that it is a long and difficult process and it does involve a great deal of detail in doing so. So in his remarks he confirms the comments I was making earlier, and I'm grateful to him for the support.

I'm very pleased that the member for Lake Nipigon notes that the members of this caucus met extensively with members of our community, our business owners, business operators and residents in our community, and discussed with them their concerns, met with the minister, who met willingly with us, met with the Premier, who met willingly with us, and brought about the necessary change.

My friend the member for Durham East flatters me when he refers to me as a hardworking member. There is no member of this House who is more hardworking and more dedicated to the needs of his constituents than the member for Durham East, and I'm grateful to him for his support tonight.

The member for Timiskaming, unfortunately, doesn't like anything we're doing over here, calls us the gang that can't shoot straight. He doesn't like tax cuts, doesn't like health care increases, doesn't like education reform, doesn't like property tax reform.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: The first thing that ought to be said right from the beginning is that we've only got 10 minutes to debate this bill now as a result of the rule changes you brought in. Here is a 72-page bill and we've been given 10 minutes to debate the merits or otherwise of the bill. That's as a result of the rule changes that were brought in. I know this probably doesn't mean much to the people of Ontario, but it sure limits the debate that can take place on any meaningful legislation here.

Let's just talk for a moment about what this government is trying to do. They're trying to implement market value assessment — no, actually it's current value assessment, because you may recall that the Minister of Municipal Affairs ran on a platform that he was never going to implement market value assessment. He sent a little leaflet out to everybody in his riding, as did the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. So they call it current value assessment.

The system is supposed to be that you pay taxes, presumably, on what your property is worth, except we have now in this bill come up with what the clerks and treasurers call an immensely complicated situation where

84 classes and subclasses and up to 156 tax rates have been introduced. We've got a so-called market value system, yet there are 156 different rates and subrates and classes that have been implemented within that system. So you tell me, what is left of a true market value system or current value system? Absolutely nothing. That's number one.

Number two: It's always interesting to listen to the member for Scarborough East. He's accusing the members of the opposition of fearmongering. I can well remember about two or three months ago reading bits and pieces in the paper where the merchants along Bloor and Danforth and various other places here in Toronto were really, really concerned because all of a sudden they were getting their assessment notices, and once they transferred and added the mill rate on top of that or multiplied it by the mill rate, they came to the conclusion that their taxes of, let's say, \$5,000 for this year were going to be \$25,000 and \$30,000. Those are the actual facts of what happened.

I'll tell you, those merchants certainly didn't think the opposition was fearmongering. Those merchants were scared for their livelihoods. So let's just forget about all this fearmongering. If there was any fearmongering that was done, it was done by you people by not getting the legislation in the proper perspective and in the proper way in the first place.

Next, I would like to refer once again to that letter I just received about an hour and a half ago from the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario. These are the civil servants who work in each and every municipality. They are not partisan politicians. They are not members of any political party. They may be in their own private life, but I'll tell you, from my dealings with most clerks and treasurers, they are usually very careful not to tell you what their political leanings are etc.

Let's just see what this group of people, who after all will have to deal with this new bill and will have to implement it in their local municipalities — these are the people who will have to discuss it with the various business people who come into the municipalities who want to know exactly what their taxes are going to be. They are going to have to deal with it on a day-to-day basis. Let's just see what this organization has written to Mr Eves today.

First of all they say, "We have written to you registering our disapproval." They start off by saying: "There are over 25 specific controls and directions through regulation" contained in the bill. "This amount of administrative discretion is excessive. It leaves administrators and municipal councils without certainty. Many of the regulations needed are key in proceeding with implementation of the act. Any delay in establishing and publishing regulations will place the financial stability of municipal government in jeopardy." This is what our clerks and treasurers are telling us is happening as a result of the bungled mess you have made of the entire situation.

They go on to say: "This bill is complicated, cumbersome, confusing and, too often, badly drafted. It serves to

perpetuate the bad system that the government was so bent on eliminating."

The government said: "We want to make it easier. We want to cut out the red tape. We want to know where businesses stand as far as the taxation is concerned." But what have they created, according to the clerks and treasurers who will be administering this bill? It says "in effect, "The end product is a political and administrative nightmare and it will perpetuate a bad system that the government was so bent on eliminating."

2040

They go on for 12 or 13 pages, and since I've got less than five minutes left, I certainly won't go over each and every page, but I will refer to a couple of other items in their letter as well. I think the people of Ontario should know, particularly the small business community, what's awaiting them if this bill gets implemented the way it is.

They talk about the business rate factors. They say it perpetuates a taxation system that is supposed to be eliminated. It adds to the already complex system and creates further confusion, inefficiency and ineffectiveness due to the administrative bureaucracy necessary to implement and manage it. It should have nothing to do with municipal law. This is what the clerks and treasurers are saying about it.

The other thing you've got to remember is that as far as the business community is concerned, more than half of your tax rate is now set by Mr Harris and Mr Eves on an annual basis when they say how much education tax you're going to be paying on your commercial or industrial property.

What do they say about that? They say: "There is no education tax room for commercial and industrial classes, notwithstanding the announced industrial educational tax payment to be made by the province. Initial...calculations show that commercial properties will not benefit and industrial properties will not have sufficient reductions in education tax to accommodate the new tax policies and downloading of services. Commercial and industrial tax rates will increase by more than 2.5% due simply to the new tax system."

Finally they say: "Few municipalities will be able to defend taxes for these classes when facing legislation that limits increases to 2.5%. Municipalities will face serious revenue shortages." This is not political propaganda. This is from your Ontario clerks and treasurers. "If commercial and industrial classes are limited to 2.5% increases, municipalities will not be able to levy sufficient funds in 1998, 1999 and 2000 to pay for operational costs" that they are incurring in the municipalities.

Let me just go to the last page of this 12-page document to where it says "Summary." I think this says it very effectively as far as they are concerned and what the small business community should know.

"This bill, if passed as drafted, will embroil municipal councils in complex, confusing and inefficient systems of taxation....

"For many municipalities, tax bills will not likely be mailed until September or...October....

"A win situation is to let Bill 16 die on the order paper. Let municipalities proceed. If any municipality wants to proceed with the provisions of the bill, then let them apply for special legislation to do so without subjecting all Ontario municipalities to the pain and suffering inherent in implementation under the bill."

That is from your professional civil service here in Ontario that will be implementing this bill once you pass it. Why don't you listen to these people? I've heard so much tonight from the government members who talk about all this consultation that has taken place. Why haven't you consulted with the most important group of municipal civil servants who will have to implement this bill? You haven't spoken to them. This is probably one of the most damning letters I have read here at any time that have been written by a group of civil servants.

They know what they're talking about. You don't know what you're talking about. Do what they ask: Let the bill die on the order paper and then let's get it straight for next year, because obviously you've made such a big mess of it that the problems are only going to get worse and worse and you, the government, are fearmongering the business community as a result of trying to implement this kind of legislation.

Mrs Boyd: It's always a pleasure to congratulate the member for Kingston and The Islands on the kind of passion and experience he brings to these issues of municipal affairs, and a real sense of how serious the changes are that the government is making in terms of how they're going to affect the different municipalities throughout the province.

It's interesting that here you have a 12-page letter from people who one would assume this government would have consulted quite thoroughly before trying to fix up its last error, which occurred because they hadn't consulted thoroughly. As we roll along from one error to another in this whole issue, it becomes very clear why governments in the past understood that it was important to do the kind of study and negotiation and to move slowly. The problem with this government is that it thinks there's a simple answer to very complex problems. As soon as they impose their simple answer and begin to see how the complexities roll out, they immediately rush back to the legislative post to try to correct the errors without doing their homework again.

That's exactly what has happened here. Virtually everything we've been discussing lately in this Legislature has been an effort by you to scramble and try to solve the problems caused by your own haste, your own lack of care and particularly your lack of consultation with people who know how your ideas will actually work in practice. That is the mark of very bad management. It is the mark of ideologues who simply will not listen to how things will work in the real world. People aren't going to be fooled at all as you go on in this way.

Mr Baird: I've got to wonder whether this issue has even been brought up with the Liberal caucus. To be a fly on the wall of a Liberal caucus would be quite an experience: Should they raise taxes, should they lower taxes,

should they keep the tax cut or not? This issue hasn't made the agenda of the Liberal caucus and I can only assume. For those people who listened to the concerns of small business, particularly in the city of Toronto, I'll tell you they would be shocked to learn that the Liberal policy is to do nothing, just to hang them up to dry.

The member for Kingston and The Islands gets up in this place and says, "Let this bill die on the order paper." I can tell the member for Kingston and The Islands that those of us on this side of the House are not prepared to hang out small business to dry. We're not prepared to tell charities, "Sorry, but Mr Gerretsen of the Liberal Party said to just let this bill die."

We simply don't accept that notion. I wish the member for Kingston and The Islands had talked to the member for Parkdale, because the member for Parkdale gave a very insightful speech the other day, and I'd like to quote Hansard on page 652 from May 14. He said:

"I never said you were totally wrong" about this bill. "I will give this government some credit. They listened." He's a Liberal, the member for Parkdale, Tony the tax hiker, gives this government some credit for listening, and now the member for Kingston and The Islands says: "No, just let the bill die on the order paper. Let small businesses be hung out to dry." We on this side of the House say, "No, we want to protect small businesses."

I would indicate to the member for Kingston and The Islands, in response to some of the comments he read from a letter that was 12 pages, then 13 pages and now 15 pages, that nothing in this legislation requires the 2.5% cut. It is completely voluntary in the local municipality. If they want to adopt it they can, and if they don't, they don't have to.

2050

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): The government calls this Bill 16 the Small Business and Charities Protection Act, and really it is protecting taxpayers from previous bills passed by this government that basically went ahead in such a mad, reckless rush that they increased the taxes on an average of 100% on half the businesses in the city of Toronto. Half the businesses got an average increase from this government of over 100%.

The only reason they're back here with the fourth try at market value reassessment Tory style is because they had a revolution on their hands in the streets of Toronto. There were 10,000 people ready to march on the gates of Queen's Park because this government never released any of the information and rushed ahead with this crazy tax scheme that was going to increase taxes. For instance, on a little restaurant that was paying \$10,000, this government was going to make them pay \$50,000. That was what Ernie Eves and this bunch of radical extreme right-wingers were going to do. They were going to wipe out small business across the city. That's what they were going to do.

When they were warned that they were going to do this, they said, "Oh, don't worry, everything is okay." The small business people across this city didn't believe these guys. That's why they took to the streets. They took to the

streets and told these people, "You'd better change that 100% tax increase." They were so frightened and running so much on their heels that they were forced into full retreat. They have the nerve now to come in with this Godzilla of a bill and say, "We are now listening." The small business people revolted and forced them to do something.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I want to thank the member for Kingston and The Islands for his comments with respect to Bill 16, the Small Business and Charities Protection Act, another one of those Tory anachronisms, another one of those doublespeak bills, a bill that doesn't really have anything to do with the protection of small business or with respect to the protection of charities. This is really just another of those examples of the Tories' phoney tax scheme. They plowed ahead with this bill without a whole lot of thought, without a whole lot of discussion about how the impact was going to be on small business, on residential taxpayers in the communities around Ontario, and now they're trying to fix it all up. I think that the member has really tried to outline that in his remarks.

In Windsor I've received hundreds of letters from people who work for small businesses in malls like the Tecumseh Mall, like the Devonshire Mall, like the University Mall, who are very concerned about the impact this bill is going to have on their businesses because they're taxed differently in a mall compared to if they operated their business in some other location.

However, when I've spoken to municipal councillors, they have had no idea about what's going to happen when this bill is passed. It's not going to leave them with any choice for three years about how they're going to justify this 2.5% cap that is being proposed to them through this bill. There are some disastrous impacts that municipal councillors are unaware of.

Mr Gerretsen: I would like to thank the members for London Centre, Windsor-Riverside, Nepean and Oakwood for their comments.

The government members just don't get it. I quoted extensively from a letter that wasn't their propaganda, wasn't our propaganda, wasn't the third party's propaganda. It was a letter written by the professional organization known as the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, which will have to deal with the consequences of this bill on a day-to-day basis. They are the people who will be meeting with the business people in their own communities, who will have to explain why the taxes went up by a certain amount, whether it's 2.5%, 10% or whatever it turns out to be. These people are saying that this bill is unmanageable.

How, for goodness' sake, can you talk about going to a current value system when you end up with 156 different classes, subclasses and rates? You don't have a system then. It becomes very arbitrary. In one given year they may very well pick on one kind of industry or another kind of business that may pay more or less than last year. People in business — and surely you, the business party, know this better than anybody else — want an amount of

certainty in their lives. They don't want to be left with a situation where all of a sudden their real estate tax bill could go up from \$5,000 to \$25,000 or \$50,000. You've got to remember, under this bill the 2.5% maximum increase is only going to be in effect for three years. What are you going to do at the end of three years to bring in the balance of that current market value system?

I say again, let this bill —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr Pouliot: I've enjoyed the remarks of the member for Kingston and The Islands simply because he's been there. For years he represented a rather large municipality, so if he says the attempt to fix Bill 106 by way of the side door, Bill 16, to fix the mess we were left with on 106, if he is filled with anxiety, I am filled with fear, because it's quite a mess indeed.

The government says, "We, the Mike Harris government, listen." You recall vividly — it's not too far back — about amalgamation here in Toronto. Some 76% of the people went to the ballot box and said: "No. Sometimes it's better not to change. We don't want this change. We don't want your melting pot, your one size or one solution fits all." The government did not listen.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which represents more than 85% of all Ontarians, is asking for public hearings. They want to go to the committee room and present their alternatives. They wish to help; not to oppose but to help the government. The government says no.

The Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, more than 800 of them, are asking the same. They are asking for a chance to make their contribution. And again the government says no.

The opposition, both parties, are asking that public hearings take place so that collectively we can see some clarity, we can better legislate together collectively. Again the government says no. In fact rumour has it and we should know shortly whether they intend one more time — and it's happened here before only too often — to silence the opposition, to handcuff the opposition, to put them in a straitjacket, to muzzle them by invoking closure. They will use their majority muscle. We're not talking about chuckles here; we're talking about their muscle and the way they dictate to others. And, yes, the government listens? Of course not when you have a litany of examples which point in the opposite direction.

These people are on a mission. It's the Mike Harris so-called Common Sense Revolution. Revolutionaries historically do not listen. They act and react.

They blew things big time on the small business front. People took to the streets. There were many demonstrations. The phones were ringing off the wall. They said, "Look, we can't do it. We have just been reassessed. In some cases I pay more taxes than what I can generate in cash flow or in profits. I cannot even pay myself a salary. I must give it all to the great Satan, if you wish." That's what they said. That's what I heard. Revenue Ontario and some to Revenue Canada, the close cousin, Lucifer. They

know these people quite well. The Minister of Finance, and some of the ensemble that make the majority muscle, said: "You can't do this to the small business people. All hell is going to break loose. People will not send you the contributions any more. The hacks refuse to talk to you. Canadian Tires are closing left and right." And heaven knows, Canadian Tires, like any other good citizens, first and foremost, want to pay their fair share of taxes.

2100

What happened? The government came in with this tentative Bill 106, regulations to reach your neighbourhood by Friday, and we'll see if the devil is indeed in the details, in the regulations. It says: "To all municipalities in Ontario: We realize, mea culpa, that we have made a mistake." Except that this government doesn't quite see it that way. "We will give you an opportunity regardless of reassessment," or assessment in some cases. "Regardless of these effects, you will have one month after you get the assessment roll, the tapes, to embark on a program, and please trust us. I, Mike Harris, am your main man. You must trust me and trust me for three years, because there is no turning back." Should you say, "I'm in, Premier," then the municipality cannot change its mind.

Oh, the welfare rolls may go up, the government may toss aside, towards you, responsibilities for a new highway, for a connecting road, more downloading. You have no protection. You said yes. With Mike you say yes for three years, no recourse. The municipalities have to make up the slack somewhere. They've got to pay for all the downloading. They don't know what the assessment and reassessment will be. There have been 3.8 million units. It has never been done in North America.

This is an endeavour, by all accounts, which should take anywhere from three to five years. If you are to conduct a reassessment of 3.8 million units, it's going to be done correctly. But the revolution does not have time. The Hummer was put in full gear and they all jumped on board. They didn't want to run out of gas — it's a long walk back to the barracks — and beware if you stood in their way. They did the exercise between 12 and 18 months. They rushed, they went too fast.

We know what they wish to do. They want to download and then they say: "It's your responsibility. It's your mess. We're not going to blame ourselves." The way with this, the more I read about it, this is the third attempt at doing it right. Everybody is saying: "We want to help you. Take your time. We're not against you. In this case, we're all parliamentarians." This thing is so messed up that it's going to take the New Democratic Party at least the next two terms to fix it up. This is how bad this is. We know we have a reputation for being able to roll up our sleeves. It's going to take us two terms because it is so messed up and you don't want to hurt people.

The tragedy of it all perhaps, what is the most telling, with all the seriousness and sincerity at our command, is that the homeowners have no protection. They pick up the slack, they pick up the downloading bills, because they don't fit the menu. They'll take to the streets and if any of them are listening, when they get their bills, I encourage

them to appeal. There will be 600,000 appeals. Hopefully, it will slow things down because they're left carrying the bag. No, they don't have the same strong voice as the banks which benefit by virtue of the business occupancy tax removal, the decrease at the small business level.

But the homeowners have no protection. I want to remind the government, because it's the language that they speak, not that of social justice, there are a lot more homeowners in this province, thank heavens, than anyone else combined. When they see the difference between last year, their first tax levy, the interim tax levy, and the final levy, in unison people will take to the streets. They will organize, they will mobilize and they will say, "The government has not listened." They will say, "Mike Harris, another promise made, another promise broken." That's what they will say.

Ms Smith, Mr Jones, beware. Those people are moving up the food chain and you might be the next in line.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Canadian — I mean Scarborough East.

Mr Gilchrist: Thank you, Mr Speaker. In fact, your inadvertent slip is precisely why I felt compelled to stand.

The member opposite, as part of the ongoing mantra of talking about negativity and trying to dwell on the shortcomings that may still exist in some small way across the province, created the suggestion that small business was in some jeopardy right now when in fact he should know that 82% of all the new jobs created in the last year were created by small business.

Mr Baird: How many new jobs?

Mr Gilchrist: How many? There were 265,000 in one 12-month period.

But what really struck me was, the member made a direct reference to my old employer, Canadian Tire, and I can't afford to let the suggestion that Canadian Tire stores are closing anywhere in Canada go unchallenged; in fact, just the opposite. He might be intrigued to know that across Canada, and particularly here in Ontario, Canadian Tire, showing the faith they have in our government, is doubling, tripling, quintupling in some cases, the square footage of existing stores. My old store at Lawrence and Markham was 15,000 square feet. They're building a new one a block away that's 85,000 square feet.

With Canadian Tire stores making that investment, as are many other retailers, the member knows, or should know, that comments about negative impact from this bill are totally untrue. It's the Canadian Tire stores that have not been fairly treated as all other small business have not been fairly treated by having a system that allowed municipal politicians to continue to avoid making some tough decisions. They can't any more because we've updated the assessment and he knows this bill is a necessary corollary.

While Canadian Tire stores out there are selling record numbers of 76-5119 tents or 99-0100 potting soil, who knows, even 85-3403 coolers, he knows that the province of Ontario is on fire and Canadian Tire of all places is not closing.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like your ruling as to whether it's permissible in this House to openly advertise for a company that's operating in Ontario. I would like your immediate ruling on that.

The Acting Speaker: I believe that it was a member of the opposition that made reference to the Canadian institution of Canadian Tire and the member for Scarborough East is merely indicating his employment with that Canadian company.

The member for Oakwood.

Mr Colle: I'd like to congratulate the member for Lake Nipigon for his, insightful comments. As you know, he comes from a community that certainly knows that the community is made up not just of the big box stores like Canadian Tire, that it's the small mom-and-pop grocery stores, the small, little restaurants. That's what he was talking about.

I know the member for Scarborough East stood up on his feet and gave this great commercial about Canadian Tire, and I guess that's where this party across the way comes from. Their primary concern is the big guys, and that's what they want to protect, first of all. That's why they got themselves into this tax mess because you know what they did is they increased — this government, all they talked to was the big banks. They didn't talk to the little mom-and-pop grocery store that was struggling, and they increased the taxes of the small, little grocery store from \$10,000 to \$50,000.

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They wouldn't do that to Canadian Tire, they wouldn't do that to the Bank of Montreal, and that's what this government is all about. That's why this government doesn't really care about small people and that's why they increased taxes on 17,000 small businesses in Toronto. They did it, and they were warned about it. They still thought they could get away with it so they could reward the banks with those big tax cuts, and Canadian Tire, God love them, could make money. But what about the small guy? I know in my own community at the end of my store I've got the big, giant box stores. I've got Home Depot, I've got Canadian Tire, I've got all these mega-stores, and the little store on the main street is dying. These guys are putting the little main street stores out of business, because they're in bed with the banks and the big box stores. That's where they are.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Windsor-Riverside. You have a Canadian Tire in your riding?

Mr Lessard: I don't know how Canadian Tire got dragged into this debate, but I know that the member for Lake Nipigon talked a lot about how the devil is in the detail, and we know that these details are going to reveal that the government made a mistake when they originally brought in this bill in dealing with the shift in property taxation and downloading on to municipalities, and now they're trying to fix it up. They're saying to municipalities: "We're going to try and do what we can to help you out in downloading this, so we'll give you this opportunity to put this 2.5% cap on commercial taxpayers. But not

only that, it's going to be a decision you'll have to make in 30 days and it's a decision that you're going to have to live with for three years."

There are a lot of municipal councillors who don't realize what impact this is going to have. It's going to mean there is going to be less money for roads and for sewers, and the bill is going to fall on to residential taxpayers. There's no doubt about that. They're going to give a break to a few people. Maybe Canadian Tire is going to be one of those who will benefit from it. I don't know. The member for Scarborough East seems to think that giving a benefit to Canadian Tire is okay. Maybe he's got thousands of shares there. Maybe his RRSPs are in Canadian Tire. I don't know. But in my community people who are involved in small business really generate the jobs, and we don't want to see them suffer from the mismanagement this government has been involved in.

Mr O'Toole: It's always a pleasure to respond to the member for Lake Nipigon. He brings a very light-hearted approach to many of his comments in the House, and I'm sure everyone listens to that light-heartedness, but really I'm not too certain how much they take it to be genuine.

I have to look at what he said, and in fact I wrote it down. He says, "Sometimes it's better not to change." Well, in government it's very difficult. To govern means that you have to have the courage to make change and to moderate that change. It's clear that in 1993 the NDP were considering a market value assessment change, and we all know what happened. They ran for cover. They ran for cover because they didn't have the courage of leadership.

Mr Gerretsen: Get it right. Then bring the bill forward.

Mr O'Toole: It's not just that. If Mr Gerretsen from Kingston and The Islands is speaking up there, what did they say in their little booklet? They said the Liberal government would reduce the corporate tax rate for small business and reduce the number of small businesses required to file corporate minimum tax etc. I think this article in the Ottawa Sun on May 24 — the title here is, "Liberals Lie, NDP Boss Says." It goes on —

Mr Gerretsen: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I have heard this now three or four times tonight. I am positive that former rulings by the Chair have been to the effect that to even mention the word "lie" or suggest that anybody lies is unparliamentary. Again, I ask for your immediate ruling on that.

The Acting Speaker: To the member for Kingston and The Islands, I believe the member for Durham East was quoting from an article. He has not named a member of this House.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'm asking you to come to order. Mr O'Toole, will you please continue.

Mr O'Toole: Respectfully, in good taste, to the House, I respect the comment of the member and I withdraw that I read that headline from the Sunday, May 24, article and go on with my comments.

It's not a case specifically of using a term. I think it's a question of having the courage and conviction to make the change. Mr Gerretsen, you were in local government and I think a member of AMO. You know that municipal tax reform has been on the books since 1970. The only difference is that this government has had the courage to make the necessary changes.

Mr Pouliot: Members for Scarborough East, Oakwood, Windsor-Riverside and Durham East, I thank you. I didn't think I was humbly able, with all due modesty, to generate such a debate among themselves. The members opposite were just about ready to eat their young. It was not a pretty sight.

Canadian Tire, yes, and we wish in Manitouwadge, in our proud communities, sir, that we had the population base to be the recipient of the good service, of the good deeds, provided by Canadian Tire. The way this government is going and the way it's borrowing at excessive rates on international markets to cover their folly, maybe Canadian Tire money would be something we can better relate to in terms of hard currency.

It's difficult for members of this government to believe anything that any member of the opposition says, but this is from the Toronto Star, their editorial page, and it came in after the ill-fated coverup, which is Bill 16, to try to fix up the mess. They were saying, "Once seen as a simple solution to provide tax relief to Toronto businesses, the idea of capping assessment-related tax hikes may now be unworkable — because" — get this — "of a surprise" twist — they say "move" — "by the province." Today, May 25, 1998, they are saying it may be unworkable.

What are we to expect after Bill 16, the son, daughter, offspring of this fiasco? It all started here with Bill 106 and then it was a mess out there, it did not work and then they came up with —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Further debate?

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Ms Mushinski: There was a time not long too long ago in the late 1980s and the early 1990s when Ontarians were growing accustomed to certain things. Yes, they were growing accustomed to the coalition of the NDP and Liberal faiths, and they had also grown accustomed to high unemployment rates, high deficits, high taxes and, more particularly, low expectations.

In the 1995 election Ontarians clearly indicated that they wanted change. They wanted to receive better service for less. They wanted a government that would be responsive to the needs of its citizens and ratepayers and taxpayers. They wanted a government that would fight the deficit instead of increasing it. They wanted a government that would create jobs and that would lower taxes instead of increasing them. Above all, they wanted a government that would keep its promises.

While there's no doubt that we have made some excellent gains, I believe, on all of these fronts —

Mr Gerretsen: So how many hospitals have you closed?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Kingston and The Islands, come to order.

Ms Mushinski: On the issue of tax reductions, there is no government in living memory that has ever cut taxes like the ones that stand today. In fact the taxes that we have reduced have created so much confidence in this province that we now have created 345,000 jobs since July 1995.

As many of you know, some of our communities in this wonderful province of ours have had property tax assessment systems that were so antiquated that they dated back to the last time Canada was at war. Bill 16 and Bill 149, which was passed by our Legislature in the last session, create a fair and uniform tax system in Ontario where one did not exist before.

I just have to digress for a moment because I want to tell you of my own personal frustrations with the previous two governments, which I alluded to earlier, as a councillor in the city of Scarborough.

We had unanimously passed a motion in Scarborough that was brought about as a result of a coalition of homeowners called SHAFT, the Scarborough Homeowners Association for Fair Taxes. For many years that association had wanted a fair assessment system in Toronto. We took all kinds of amendments to the Metro level of government, and they in turn actually came up with a proposal that they took to the then provincial NDP government of the day, which also happened to have a commission called the Fair Tax Commission, which also recommended a number of initiatives to make the system much fairer province-wide. Unfortunately, I guess I believe in the old adage, "No guts, no glory." The fact is they didn't have any guts to implement what their own commission had recommended. Instead they put it on the shelf yet again, ignoring all the requests, including — I hear it very often from the member for Scarborough-Agincourt — where 80% of his own homeowners would receive tax reductions under a fair market value assessment system.

When it comes to the bill that's under question, which is the Small Business and Charities Protection Act, it's important to reiterate to everyone in this House that there isn't a government like our government that supports small business, because in fact it was small business we had in mind when we eliminated regulations that make it difficult to do business in Ontario.

We had that in mind when we eliminated one of those infamous tax increases. Oh, it's three terrible words to say, but it was called the commercial concentration tax. It was the commercial concentration tax which was the biggest drain on the economic development of the Metropolitan Toronto region and it was brought in by the Liberal government of which Mr Colle, the member for Oakwood, has spoken. It just boggles my mind when he stands up and berates our government for eliminating something that he created in terms of the biggest hole-in-the-doughnut syndrome we've ever seen in this province. You are the ones that tried to break the economic engine of this province, not us. In fact, what we're doing is fixing

it, putting it in order. We have listened to the small business community that has asked us to make sure we mitigate the appropriate increases that we know a fair assessment system is going to create.

Mr Colle: Why did you increase 100% for 17,000 small businesses?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Oakwood, please come to order.

Ms Mushinski: So we had small businesses in mind when we talked about reducing the deficit and we certainly had small businesses in mind when we cut taxes in an effort to create job growth, and we're starting to see the results of that. On March 27, 1998, Ernie Eves announced at a restaurant in Toronto that small business and charities would be protected from skyrocketing tax rates. That's what this bill is all about. It was a promise we made to small business and charities in Ontario and it is a promise that is kept with the acts we debate tonight.

The Small Business and Charities Protection Act provides municipalities with the tools they need to fight taxes for small businesses and charities. The act protects small businesses from property tax increases of more than 2.5% for a period of three years, and no matter where a business is located in a municipality, the highest increase that a small business can have will be limited to that amount, something neither of the two previous

governments had the guts to do. Moreover, to ensure that all small businesses are protected, the 2.5% limit will also apply to small businesses that lease their properties.

While our government is shielding small business from municipalities that are proposing large tax increases, we are also protecting charities as well. The proposed legislation grants further powers to municipalities to help small businesses and charities, particularly including graduated tax rates for industrial properties, four new optional property classes, extended powers to face tax changes — for example, graduated tax increases — and rebates on tax increases for commercial and industrial properties.

I want to close by saying that the proposed legislation will help small businesses by not allowing municipalities to increase property taxes by more than 2.5%. That was something that was proposed by the metropolitan level of government a number of years ago, of which Mr Colle was also a member, and which the NDP government didn't have the guts to implement. Not only is this legislation fair and reasonable, but ultimately it makes plain, old common sense.

The Acting Speaker: It now being almost 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 11:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2128.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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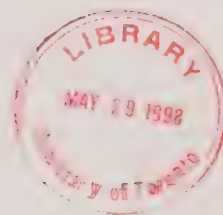
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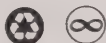
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 mai 1998

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I've spoken many times in this Legislature about the health care needs in my community of Thunder Bay in northwestern Ontario. I've called on the minister to recognize that there is a mental health care crisis in our part of the province and asked her to take action. I've expressed grave concerns about the loss of acute care beds in our community and the need for the minister to provide adequate funding so that no more beds are lost.

Today I feel compelled to plead with the minister to deal with the long-term-care needs in our district, needs that are not being remotely met by her recent announcement of long-term-care funding. Specifically, the minister has allocated an additional 195 beds for our entire district over the next eight years. The fact that this number is woefully inadequate cannot be overstated. Right now, in 1998, we have a waiting list almost double that number. The fact that no new beds will be in place until at least the year 2000 is a grave concern.

Another reality increases our concern. Right now in Thunder Bay, Hogarth-Westmount Hospital is home to 130 residents of long-term care. But these 130 beds are only being funded on a temporary basis. These people will not be returning home; these beds are not temporary. The minister must recognize that and fund these beds on a permanent basis. People need to know they will not be removed from their home.

While I think you realize that these beds must be considered permanent, I only hope you do not view them as part of our new eight-year allotment. Minister, do the right thing: Fund these beds on a permanent basis and make it clear that they are not part of our future long-term-care allotment.

BANK MERGERS

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): This morning, my colleague MPP Rosario Marchese and I joined our federal counterpart, NDP banks critic Lorne Nystrom, in decrying the move that is continuing towards bank mergers here in

this country. As Mr Nystrom said this morning: "Merger plans by four of the five big banks are nothing more than high-stakes wagers by the banks to play in the big leagues of global finance. The only certainty is that the losers in this game will be consumers and small businesses in cities like Toronto." That could be said throughout the whole country.

Indeed, we know that the bank mergers that are being discussed will mean less competition. That point was also made by a representative from the Toronto Small Business Support Association, vice-president John Anderson, who was there to indicate his opposition to the bank mergers and to say: "Small business has been at the mercy of the banks for years because of a lack of competition. The proposed mergers would only make a bad situation worse."

We continue to take that position, a position that has also been taken by such individuals as Henry N. R. Jackman, who both orally and in some of the writings that he's recently made has also made it clear that in his view the proposed bank mergers would do nothing to improve competition, but would in fact reduce competition. That is something that can only be bad for consumers.

DIABETES FUND-RAISING EVENT

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): It gives me great pleasure to rise today to announce that one of my constituents will be embarking on a most challenging and remarkable endeavour on June 1.

Ayden Byle, a 23-year-old resident of Inverhuron, is one of the roughly 1.6 million Canadians who suffer from diabetes. Ayden will be undertaking a run across Canada to raise funds for diabetes research. He will begin his run on June 1 from Vancouver and hopes to complete his run in Halifax on October 16. The Canada Challenge - Ayden Byle Run is endorsed by the Islet Foundation, a charity devoted to diabetic research and raising the awareness of the serious and widespread nature of this disease and how important it is to find a cure.

I would like to challenge all members of this Legislature to personally donate to Ayden's run. Donations can be made at any branch of the Bank of Montreal. Ayden's run is a tremendous challenge which takes a great deal of courage and fortitude. His task could be that much more difficult given that he too suffers from diabetes and must take five insulin shots per day.

Last Wednesday evening an official sendoff was hosted by Ayden's organizers in the town of Kincardine. Funds

have been raised locally to offset his run expenses and corporate donors have also come forward with in-kind contributions.

In Ayden's own words: "I might start out alone, but by the time I get to Halifax, there will be 1.6 million people with me. We are the cure. You have to get involved."

I would like, therefore, to ask all members of this Legislature to join with me in wishing Ayden and his team a safe and successful journey.

TRAFFIC CONTROL

Mr David Caplan (Orillia): I rise to recognize the achievements of my constituents in the Meadoways community. This community is an inspiring example of a group of citizens who forced this government to hold to its promises. After the tragic death of Kim Wong in her home in August 1996, residents united to demand protection from the traffic on Highway 404.

Mrs Wong's neighbours, such as Mary-Jane Rose, Dave Slotnick and Karen Cassel, have worked tirelessly for this cause. Following the accident, they called on the Minister of Transportation to build a barrier to protect residents from further harm, which he promised to do. With no action after one year, they organized a community memorial at which ribbons were tied to the fence around this accident site as a symbol that the promise remained unfulfilled. Fortunately this finally forced then-Minister Palladini to act.

Last night I was honoured to attend a ribbon rally reunion to celebrate the recent completion of the new earth barrier. I had the pleasure of joining these neighbours when they untied the many yellow ribbons attached to the fence of the accident site. Their dreams were finally realized and they could now sleep at night knowing that their homes were no longer the traffic barriers for the entire community.

I want to personally extend my thanks to the residents of the Meadoways for their dedication. It was inspiring to watch the friends and neighbours of the Wong family in their efforts to make the community safe and an honour for me to be a part of their efforts. I congratulate them and thank them for their perseverance.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): My statement today is on health care for northern Ontario. Why is the Mike Harris government dragging its feet on health care in northern Ontario?

In my riding of Cochrane North we have a critical situation with the shortage of doctors. In Kapuskasing, at Sensenbrenner Hospital, the only anaesthesiologist has left. As we all know, a hospital cannot function without a full-time anaesthesiologist. As a result, the hospital is now unable to provide emergency procedures in obstetrics on an around-the-clock basis.

Many people in our community are working together to attract doctors and specialists to our community. But we

need the proper tools and incentives and we need the help of the Conservative government. Why then did this government break its \$36.4-million promise to help underserved northern communities to attract doctors and specialists?

In December 1996, as part of an agreement with the OMA, the Harris government announced funding of \$36.4 million to help underserved communities in northern and rural Ontario to attract doctors and specialists. To date, two years after the announcement, not one of those designated communities, including Kapuskasing, Hearst, Cochrane or Moosonee, has received a penny of the funding from this government.

The Minister of Agriculture and francophone affairs was in Kapuskasing recently and met with the members of the health care recruitment and retention committee. The minister indicated that he will speak with the Minister of Health about this issue. What good is talk if we don't get action? We need action now. I urge the Minister of Agriculture to tell the Minister of Health that we need proper resources to attract doctors and specialists to communities like Kapuskasing. We need the action now, not two years from now.

ST BENEDICT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Recently I had the honour and privilege to attend the St Benedict Elementary School's math, science and technology week, May 4 to 8, which focused on the history of transportation. The purpose of the week was to expose students to the history and evolution of transportation and how it will shape their future. St Benedict's students had the opportunity to witness at first hand various modes of transportation from classic cars, like a 1967 MGB, to the latest in today's transportation technology.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank St Benedict Elementary School for inviting me to this wonderful learning experience. I would also like to recognize the extremely hard work put in by principal Philip Riddell, Susan Gonzales, Cathy Waddell, Carrie Hogan, Raffi Suppon and Tony Di Angelo, as well as the many hundreds of students who helped to make this an excellent learning experience not only for the students of St Benedict's but also for the community that supports this excellent school.

1340

ONTARIO'S CREDIT RATING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Three years ago to the day, Mike Harris preached simple math principles like two plus four equals six, and \$6 billion would be all it would take to balance the budget. Like everything else, this too has proven to be a hollow promise. The budget still isn't balanced. Mike Harris is way behind on his job creation promise.

Our debt continues to grow at a rate only matched by the NDP between 1990 and 1995. As a result, the

American credit rating agency Standard and Poor's has given Mike Harris's Ontario the same credit rating it gave to the NDP's Ontario: a bad one. Gone are the good credit rating days of the last Liberal provincial government, and gone too is the confidence Ontarians, Canadians and the world had in Ontario. This poor credit rating signals to the international banking community that Ontario's fiscal policy — Mike Harris's financial plan for Ontario — is less than a desirable one, and the Bank of Montreal says that further tax cuts aren't the way to go.

Why doesn't Mike Harris listen to what the experts are saying? Less debt, a balanced budget: That's what Mike Harris promised and that's what Ontarians want now. Why doesn't Mike Harris do what he said he was going to do three years ago when he said, "The basic arithmetic of two plus four equals six means that you can balance the budget and create jobs"? I'm sorry, I say to Mike Harris: a promise made, a promise broken.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION LADIES' AUXILIARY

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I want to rise today to signify a very important milestone in the riding of Cochrane South. The ladies' auxiliary of the Royal Canadian Legion, South Porcupine Branch 287, had the opportunity last Saturday evening to celebrate 60 years of activity on the part of the ladies' auxiliary within the community of South Porcupine.

I think we all know, as members, the work that the Legion does within our communities in supporting various sports organizations and other worthy causes. The work of people like Sharon Lajeunesse, Lil McCord and a whole bunch of other people I can name often goes unrewarded in the sense of people acknowledging the work they do and how important they are to our community, and I want to take this opportunity to give them the credit they are due.

Unfortunately, last Saturday night I was unable to be with them at their 60th anniversary as we had our provincial convention in Hamilton and obviously I had to be there. So I want to take this opportunity to congratulate all of the members of the Legion and the ladies' auxiliary for their 60th anniversary and to wish them well. I look forward to being invited in the next 60 years when they have their 120th anniversary.

AVALON RETIREMENT CENTRE

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to acknowledge and congratulate the Avalon Retirement Centre in Orangeville on the occasion of its 15th anniversary. The Avalon was one of the first continuum-of-care facilities in Ontario and has cared for over 1,000 residents in its 15-year history.

At the core of Avalon's success are the many dedicated staff members, led by Dave and Donna Holwell, who care for the residents. Volunteers have also enhanced the quality of life at the centre by providing over 37,000 hours of service to the facility in a variety of ways, including visits,

pet therapy and the operation of the Tuck Shoppe. Life at the Avalon is a true reflection of its motto, "We Care...And it Shows."

To add to the excitement of this 15th anniversary celebration, Orangeville's newest seniors' residence, the Lord Dufferin Centre, is slated to open its doors this summer. The residence will comprise 78 suites and include a spa, an exercise room, a chapel and many other exciting facilities.

Both the Avalon and the Lord Dufferin Centre allow seniors to live independently and among friends while enjoying the comfort of housekeeping services and prepared meals.

The Avalon Retirement Centre sets an example of standards to be achieved. I wholeheartedly congratulate them for their drive and dedication, which have given them 15 successful years. We look forward to the Lord Dufferin Centre continuing on with this tradition of excellence.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We have a distinguished guest from the city of Elliot Lake. Councillor Fred Mann is here with us today in the west members' gallery.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): That's out of order, but welcome.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): On that note, I have a point of order: I'd like to signify that there are two people from Timmins. Dale Tonelli is here, from Telemedia radio; and Brian Dougherty, a good constituent from the city of Timmins.

The Speaker: Welcome. I just want to say that that's it; we're not going to go down this road any more. Tomorrow and the next day as well, there are no more introductions.

EDWARD BIGELOW JOLLIFFE

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I rise to ask unanimous consent to note the passing of a former Leader of the Opposition.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Wildman: Edward (Ted) Bigelow Jolliffe died recently at his home in British Columbia. I want to pay tribute to him today.

Ted Jolliffe was born in Luchow, China, to missionary parents in 1909. He was educated in China, at Victoria College at the University of Toronto and was a Rhodes Scholar at Christchurch, Oxford.

His family roots in old Ontario gave him the connections and the confidence to campaign enthusiastically in villages and towns throughout the province for democratic socialism, in which he believed and which he believed wholeheartedly would bring a better life to all the people of Ontario.

Mr Jolliffe was a quiet intellectual not noted for being a politician who used extreme rhetoric or, for that matter, even the stirring oratory of the style of Tommy Douglas or David Lewis, his contemporaries. His manner was straightforward, leaving listeners to feel that they were

being addressed as intelligent adults. He was a politician who embodied faith, intellect and idealism, combining all of these to the best of his ability. Ted Jolliffe once said, "Democracy is not just a babble of voices." I think that's something that many in this House would do well to remember in the future.

Ted Jolliffe might have been Ontario's first socialist Premier. His association with the CCF began in the 1930s, not long after the party was formed. He soon became the provincial leader in 1942, a position he held until 1953. In 1953, Ted Jolliffe led the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation to within five seats of forming a government here at Queen's Park. The CCF became the official opposition, winning 34 seats, just four short of the Progressive Conservatives.

Ted Jolliffe was the provincial leader of the CCF, our party, at a crucial time in the development of social democracy in Canada. He came within just a few thousand votes of forming a government in 1943.

In the 1945 provincial election, Mr Jolliffe told the public in a radio broadcast late in the campaign that he feared that the Conservative Premier, George Drew, was maintaining a secret police force to spy on political opponents and the media. This led to a significant drop in support for Mr Jolliffe in that election campaign, because I think the public in Ontario did not like the tone of his comments and didn't really believe that what he was saying could be true. Almost 30 years later, though, during the work for the autobiography of David Lewis, documents were discovered from the Premier's office which showed that Mr Jolliffe's charges were indeed true.

Mr Jolliffe was again Leader of the Opposition from 1948 to 1951. After he retired from politics, he went on to a distinguished career in labour law and was appointed the first chief adjudicator for the federal public service staff relations board.

Ted Jolliffe pulled Ontario politics to the left. He forced George Drew and the Conservatives to run on a more progressive platform, causing major reforms in health, education and public enterprise.

The law firm Jolliffe, Lewis and Osler became known as a powerhouse for labour causes and labour cases and was credited for helping bring Canadian unions together in the 1950s. Our party certainly, and all the politics of Ontario, owe a great debt to the work of Ted Jolliffe, and we mourn his passing and express our condolences to his family.

1350

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): It's indeed a privilege to take part in today's remembrance of Ted Jolliffe, who passed away in March. His talent and dedication to his political beliefs had a significant impact on the birth of the Ontario New Democratic Party.

While no member of this Legislature served with Mr Jolliffe, we should not discount the impact of his years as an MPP, which included an impressive provincial election campaign as leader of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. Mr Jolliffe was a force to be reckoned with.

Under his leadership the CCF came within five seats of forming the provincial government in 1943.

The greatest strength of our parliamentary system is that the viewpoints of various segments of society can find a home within our mainstream political parties, their caucuses and their leaders. Mr Jolliffe's inspired leadership and the ideals he stood for no doubt influenced political thought and government policy, especially during the minority Conservative government of George Drew. His work for the CCF and later his impressive legal career were instrumental in the formation of the Ontario New Democratic Party.

When I was first elected in 1990, Mr Jolliffe lived in Rockwood, in Wellington county. I regret that I never had the opportunity to meet him, although I suspect he wasn't my strongest supporter.

Dale Hamilton, who is a resident of the Rockwood area, has fond memories of Mr Jolliffe. Ms Hamilton got to know Mr Jolliffe and his wife when they lived in Rockwood before their retirement in British Columbia.

It's important to remember Mr Jolliffe not only for his accomplishments and the impact he had on our political landscape, but also on a more personal level, through the impressions of people who were his friends. Ms Hamilton's memories, printed recently in the *Guelph Mercury*, give us a better understanding of the man behind the public figure. Of the Jolliffes, Ms Hamilton said: "Ted and Ruth cared deeply about people and they acted upon it. Their generosity of spirit guided their choices and priorities in life."

One of Ms Hamilton's more vivid memories was of Mr Jolliffe "surrounded by stacks of important-looking papers, his pipe smoke circling his head, sitting on the rickety sunporch at the white house on the hill in Rockwood. Mrs Jolliffe was in the background, offering up tea and her own welcome insights."

To the people who were the closest to Ted Jolliffe, his children and his family, I offer our sincere condolences on behalf of the provincial government. May his life and record of public service continue to serve as an inspiration to all of us.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On behalf of the Liberal caucus, I would like to extend the sympathy of all of us upon the passing of Edward Bigelow Jolliffe. Even though it happened some period of time ago, in March of this year, we haven't had an opportunity in this Legislature to pay tribute to him.

He had a significant impact, of course, on Ontario politics, because previous to his ascension to a position of significance within the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in Ontario, many people viewed the CCF as essentially a western party, and some as a western protest party, certainly a party that gathered together a group of people who had a very strong social conscience, who believed in what we would call the social democratic agenda for that day. Some of those policies grew out of the difficulties which were encountered in our country in the 1930s and Ted Jolliffe was able to translate that into political action in the 1940s.

As my colleague from Algoma has appropriately pointed out, a lot of people in the province today would probably not recognize that Ted Jolliffe came quite close to being the Premier of the province of Ontario. If you look at straight statistics, during the early and mid-1940s you would see that the CCF came up considerably in the polls and that was reflected in the numbers of seats won in the Legislative Assembly at that time. Much of that credit must go to Ted Jolliffe, who was an articulate and eloquent individual who brought to the debates in the House the kind of respect we like to think of in parliamentarians.

My colleague from Renfrew North, one of the historians of this House, who knows these things well, was just telling me before I rose that there was a speech given on CFRB, about that time, what, 40 years ago?

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): In 1945.

Mr Bradley: It was 1945, says my colleague. It was a speech which dealt with an allegation that there was some political surveillance of certain people in the province, directed, it was alleged, by the government of the day. It was quite a stunning speech, one of the better speeches given in this century by a provincial politician. I'm told, again by my irrefutable and impeccable source, that it was actually written by Lister Sinclair and delivered by Ted Jolliffe.

He had a significant impact on this province. In addition to that, he went on, after his life in politics, to continue to make a contribution to public service. He retired to Saltspring Island in British Columbia. There are just a few socialists on that island, I'm told, because a friend of mine, Ken Lee, a former St Catharines Collegiate principal, has retired to Saltspring Island. He is well known for his views, which are of a socialist nature, and he mentioned that one of the famous people on Saltspring Island was Ted Jolliffe.

He was a labour lawyer, so he played a significant role not only in this court, which is a parliamentary court, but also in the courts of justice and the civil courts of Ontario.

Those of us who are in this Legislature — and I can say this on behalf of the Liberal caucus — extend our deepest sympathy to the family of Ted Jolliffe and pay tribute to him for his years of service to the people of Ontario.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that notwithstanding standing order 95(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item 12.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I am pleased to inform the House that earlier today the government of Ontario and the Ontario Medical Association unveiled a new model of enhanced primary care in five communities. Those five communities are Hamilton, Chatham, Paris, Wawa, and the villages of Sydenham, Verona and Sharbot Lake in the Kingston area.

"Primary care" is a term that refers to a person's first point of contact with a health provider. The new model announced today is the result of two years of consultation with physicians and other health care providers that will allow for quality care that is more accessible, comprehensive, coordinated and continuous. It is based on the concept of a network of providers, including physicians at one or more locations who will roster or enrol patients for the purposes of providing primary care services.

Discussions about creating this new model of primary care began under my predecessor, the Honourable Jim Wilson, with the creation of a steering committee, chaired by Dr Graham, made up of physicians, academics, a hospital CEO, a nurse and consumers. Our new model of care reflects the advice of this committee and the input of other health care providers, as well as the direct involvement of the Ontario Medical Association. It illustrates our shared commitment to exploring more accessible and innovative ways of delivering health services to Ontarians.

Under this new model of care, there will be expanded access to on-call services, enhanced prevention services for patients, evening and weekend hours, after-hours telephone advice from a registered nurse and improved use of technology, including computerized patient files.

1400

We will be evaluating the five new primary care pilots and making changes as required. These first sites should be seen as an opportunity to learn more about what will work and what will not, and to make changes as needed.

Under our primary care pilots, physicians will have two options as to how they are paid: either capitation or reformed fee for service. Capitation means that funding is attached to each patient and is calculated on factors including their age and gender. This model is already used by 77 health service organizations across Ontario. The second model involves physicians billing a reformed fee for service. Regardless of the payment method, the funding formula will encourage home care supervision and preventive medicine.

It is also important to emphasize that patients will be invited by their physicians to participate in the pilots. Primary care reform will be voluntary for both physicians and patients in the pilot communities.

In conclusion, let me again congratulate my predecessor, the Honourable Mr Wilson, and all those involved in developing this model for enhanced primary care. I am

particularly pleased that not only will illness be treated and health problems managed, but these new primary health care pilots will promote health and prevent illness. This is indeed an exciting day for people in the province as we enhance accessibility, coordination, comprehensiveness and the continuity of care in providing primary care services to Ontarians.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): It is indeed an exciting day when this government actually recognizes that "primary" care means "first." Unfortunately for the people of Ontario, it's three years too late that this government finally gets the idea that if you're going to renew the health system, you start with the first part of it, the contact the patient has with doctors and other providers. What we had was the previous Minister of Health announcing that there would be these pilot projects by December 1996. Instead we're here today looking at their very late arrival.

That represents something important. It represents a certain lack of commitment on the part of this government to actually making the health care system work. Why did this government go after hospitals in such a random and reckless way? Why did it take away 12% of their budget, some \$1.3 billion? Why did it put patients into the hallways of those hospitals, waiting for three days or as many as eight days for basic services when it could and should have been looking at how to deal with doctors, how to make services more available and not less available.

We have finally from this government the announcement of intention to do something about primary care reform. Not only is it way overdue, but it comes in a different kind of circumstance. It comes after the people of Ontario, the nurses of Ontario and probably many of the doctors of Ontario have been worn down by a system of an uncaring government unable to manage the basic prerequisites of health care. So when we talk about the takeup of change, the ability to get people to deal with a new part of the system, it's probably not a very exciting day for most people out there. It probably is simply one of resignation that this government might finally, in advance of election year, be touching on some of the things they were elected to do in the first place, which was to deal with the needs of the health care system.

We're pleased to see the government at least acknowledge that there are some possibilities in terms of rostering, in terms of bringing patients together. We're also pleased to acknowledge that it's very important to try to look at different ways that doctors can get into preventive care. But this is three years later. This is three years after this government started creating messes in the health care system.

While the minister says and would like us to believe that the government is serious about preventive care, it's the same government that has dumped public health down on to the municipalities, that has made many communities face the prospect of losing their preventive health care. We have sexual health clinics being cut back in their hours, and other clinics that provide basic care, the same kind of care the minister is trying to announce as some-

thing new today, are being taken away from them in communities across Ontario.

We have also the same kind of thing, where we don't know how this will be paid for. The government would have us believe this is something exciting and new, and in fact there's no mention of the details of where this money will come from. If these are doctors being taken out of fee for service, will the fee-for-service budgets be affected? How will this be paid for? How will it actually encourage the doctors to take this on?

The kinds of things that the minister is depending on for this to work, for example computerization, information technology, hasn't even been touched by this government. They haven't set up any of the infrastructure to actually make some of these systems work. The government talks about primary care as if they invented it, when all previous governments have worked hard to try and understand it. It's only this government that has done nothing with this file until today.

The 77 health service organizations are already out there, have been providing service, yet this government doesn't bring forward one iota of information about what has been accomplished. They say they're going to use capitation — pay by the number of people served per doctor — yet there's nothing about what we've learned from health service organizations. There are already more people involved in them than the government purports to put into this pilot project. Why don't we have some information? Why is the government going slow on this project in terms of being able to tell us what they're going to do about it?

I think the answer is that this is simply a public relations move on the part of the government. They're bringing it in, very late in their term, because they're afraid to really do what primary health care would require, what Duncan Sinclair said should have been done at the beginning of the whole project, and that is to care for patients. They'll find out that a system that has been bankrupted, with money taken out of the system for patients, can't deliver the care that primary care reform needs.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): The minister knows very well that the people of Ontario have been waiting for this announcement not just for two years but for many years. When the member for Beaches-Woodbine was Minister of Health, she began the process, with the OMA, of looking at real reform of primary care. It is a very difficult issue that all those we've talked to all across the province have identified as key to reforming the health care system, and that is: "What is the first step? How do I first get access to appropriate medical care?"

Real primary care reform means more access to not only a physician, which is all this is, but to a range of health care professionals. There's nothing in this announcement that does anything to lessen the gate-keeping effect that the medical profession currently has on access to medical care. There is nothing in this announcement that requires those physicians within this network of physicians to share some of those resources with the other

health care professionals who are essential to a broad range of care within the province.

The minister claims that there is a list of so-called enhanced services, and I'd like us to take a quick look at those.

Patient education and preventive care: But when you look at her announcement, it talks about printed leaflets. Printed leaflets? Those are available in my doctor's office. I don't know about anybody else. That's her idea of enhanced care?

Primary mental health care, including referral to an appropriate community service: Doesn't that happen already? What's new here?

Referral to other specialists: What's new about that? Doesn't every family physician do referrals to specialists as required?

Access to hospital care: Just imagine. Doesn't your primary care physician have to have hospital privileges to practise? Under Bill 26, he or she does.

So where's something new? There's nothing new in these so-called enhanced services, and there is much that has been identified as necessary if we are going to have primary care reform.

Even the minister says this is not that new, because there are already 77 different organizations around the province, only those community health centres and those group health practices like the one in Sault Ste Marie offer a far broader range of services than the minister is announcing today. She had a model, she had two or three models, that really offered enhanced care, that offered a range of services by professionals.

1410

She talks about evaluation of this system. Why hasn't she initiated a thorough evaluation of the really reformed primary care systems that already exist to show how that kind of continuity of care offered by physicians in conjunction with psychologists, nurse practitioners, chiropractors — the whole range of professionals who can offer to clients the kind of care that people all over this province are demanding. Oh no, that's not what's here.

What this is is another cosy little deal with the OMA, another way of putting off real reform of primary care, another way of preventing the sharing of resources with other health care professionals. This is just part of the cosy deal that this government signed with physicians that they can't get out of and that they have been trying very hard to at least make some cracks in.

We want to know what the evaluation process is going to be. Is it going to involve the patients? Is it going to look at utilization rates? Is it going to look, over the long term, at whether this model actually has a preventive component to it? Is it really going to see whether this makes physicians willing to participate in community-based care in a more thorough way than before? Is it going to talk about patient satisfaction and families of patients and their satisfaction with the kind of service? Is it going to survey the other professionals in the community to see whether there is really a willingness on the part of the physicians participating to refer to other health care professionals who

can offer the wide range of services? I would be surprised, because if that were so, I think the minister would be saying so.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I would like to inform members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today some interns from the province of British Columbia. I'd like you to join me in welcoming them here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I have in my hands a letter from the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, dated yesterday, May 25, in which they are very critical of Bill 16 and have some grave concerns about it. Let me just read you only one little paragraph. It says:

"This bill is complicated, cumbersome, confusing and, too often, badly drafted. It serves to perpetuate the bad system that the government was so bent on eliminating. The end product is a political and administrative nightmare."

I would like to know, Minister, where were you in this process? This act, as you know, makes a number of changes to the Municipal Act. Where were you to fight on behalf of municipalities? Where were you to fight on behalf of the property taxpayers, both residential property taxpayers and the commercial and industrial taxpayers in this province? Where were you? How could you allow this to happen?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I can tell the member opposite where I was: I was in consultation with my colleague the Minister of Finance, and agree 100% with the bill.

The bill is going to protect the taxpayer. It allows for caps. It gives municipalities all the options and all the ability they need to deal with matters of municipal concern. I am fully supportive of the bill, and I honestly believe the opposition should also be supporting this bill.

Mr Gerretsen: Minister, you know that the municipal clerks and treasurers are the people who deal on a day-to-day basis with the property taxpayers in Ontario. Let me quote another section: "If commercial and industrial classes are limited to 2.5% increases, municipalities will not be able to levy sufficient funds in 1998, 1999 and 2000 to pay for operational costs" etc.

They further go on to say: "Major priority services such as roads, sewers, water and fire departments will be threatened. Quality of life services such as recreation, libraries, community support, public health, tourism,

economic development will be cut to the core or eliminated."

They are the concerns of our municipal taxpayers, whether they're residential taxpayers or commercial and industrial taxpayers. Where were you in all this?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mr Gerretsen: There's also a section, as you well know, subsection 8(2), which states that if a change event takes place, the assessor isn't even obligated to allow the change to take place so that taxes will actually be lower, which is exactly what the —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mr Leach: Again to the member of the official opposition, these are options that are available to the municipality. If the municipality doesn't want to put the cap on, that's a decision the municipality makes.

We've given the municipalities the autonomy to make the decisions that best suit their municipality. The municipalities have the best of both worlds here. If they want to protect small business, as the city of Toronto indicated it did, they have the ability to put on a 2.5% cap for the next three years. If they choose not to do that, they don't have to do that. They can raise taxes; they can hold taxes; they can do whatever they want. These are decisions that those directly elected municipal councillors have the ability to do.

Mr Gerretsen: Minister, it's like a trap for the municipalities in the same way that your downloading of over half a billion dollars on municipalities was.

Let me just read to you the summary paragraph of what they're saying: "This bill, if passed as drafted, will embroil municipal councils in complex, confusing and inefficient systems of taxation. Administrative costs will increase. So complex is the application of Bill 106, Bill 149 and Bill 16, that few municipalities in Ontario will be able to fully bill taxes before the year is ended with any degree of success...."

How could you, as Minister of Municipal Affairs, allow this to happen? Why didn't you protect the municipalities and the taxpayers who pay the taxes into those municipalities?

Hon Mr Leach: I can see that the member opposite has some problem with giving municipalities the autonomy to make decisions that best suit that municipality.

As far as the clerks and treasurers are concerned, we had consultations with them. We will have further consultations with them. As a matter of fact, I'm going to be speaking to them a week Monday and I'll be glad to answer all of their concerns at that point in time.

Our whole purpose behind this bill was to ensure that the municipalities had an opportunity to protect their taxpayers, whether it's residential or commercial and industrial. But if they choose not to put a cap on commercial and industrial, if they choose to go another way, that's their decision. That's what they're elected to do. You should understand that the municipality is the level of government that sets property taxes, and what this government has done is given them the opportunity to make decisions that best suit their individual circumstances.

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): My question is for the Minister of Health. I'd like to ask you about your announcement today. In fact, if anyone is trying to understand it better, they might like to look at another announcement that's entitled "Government Announces New Decisions for Primary Care," except that announcement was made on July 18, 1996. This announcement talks about 25 reports having been done on primary care. It talks about 430 physicians already engaged in primary care.

Minister, why did you wait so long to begin anything in terms of a new primary care initiative? Are you serious about doing primary care? How can the public believe you when it has taken your ministry three years to get to the same point we were at in July 1996?

1420

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Today we had the opportunity to officially announce the five communities that were going to be the initial participants in the pilot project.

Yes, as I acknowledged in my remarks, our government did make a commitment about two years ago. It was during the time of my predecessor, Minister Wilson, that we indicated we wanted to move forward with primary care. We wanted to ensure that we could increase the accessibility and the coordination and provide the highest quality of primary care possible to people in this province. We indicated that we believed it was necessary to involve health providers in team situations, and this is what we're going to be able to do.

Our announcement today is to acknowledge and recognize those communities that have indicated a willingness to participate.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would just again announce that those five will be in Hamilton, Paris, Wawa, Chatham, and there will be some small communities around Kingston, that have all indicated —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Kennedy: You can barely shake the cobwebs off the minister's announcement for how similar it is to the old announcement that's almost two years old. It was building on what was supposed to be the progress to that point.

Minister, you haven't done anything about real preventive care. You've still downloaded public health. In Hamilton there's a Bagshaw clinic that's been cut down to 15 hours, where it used to have 40 hours of operation. You've taken that preventive care away from the people of Hamilton. There are no evenings and no weekends. It was the longest-running sexual health clinic in North America, but it's not able to operate. An Ottawa clinic is \$20,000 short; they're going to have to get sponsorship from pharmaceutical companies to keep going, because you, Minister, aren't doing your job in preventive care. You also aren't doing anything about underserved areas. You haven't done anything in this model to make sure that communities

can attract more physicians. You promised, or your predecessor did and you failed to follow through on it, \$36 million worth of funding.

The Speaker: Question, please.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, are you going to do something about underserved areas as part of primary care, or are the people in those communities not going to get doctors —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I know the member has some problem recognizing when progress is being made, and certainly today in the province of Ontario —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Today we have taken a very significant step forward. We have done so in cooperation with the other health care providers. The announcement today was done in cooperation with the Ontario Medical Association. We wanted to ensure that as we move forward we would have a system that was going to be responsive to the needs of people in this province.

This is a new system of service, and there will be an emphasis on prevention. In fact, we have spent more money on prevention than any other government. A few months ago I indicated that we were spending \$17 million on prevention of cardiac disease. We have made commitments, all new money, and we have continued to indicate that we are shifting the focus at the Ministry of Health from illness to wellness. We are concentrating now on the promotion of health.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr David Caplan (Orlino): Minister, you're missing the point. My colleague from York South asked you about underserved areas. Your colleague the Minister of Education has deregulated tuitions. What that has done, Minister, is that in effect you're forcing graduating students to place a greater emphasis on income potential than on meeting community need. In the United States, when they did this, students went into specialties, not into becoming general practitioners, which are needed in underserved areas.

You speak about working with medical establishments. I'll quote from John Gray, the president of the OMA. He said: "It is clear that with spiralling tuition and fixed resources, medical school will place a growing proportion of students in a position of extreme financial burden or will be altogether prohibitive in cost. If we are to encourage young minds to enter into the study and practice of medicine, we must not make these barriers so extreme as to deny access to any individual." That's what you're doing, Minister. Will you stand up and make sure that all students have access to medical school?

The Speaker: I just remind members that supplementaries relate to the question to begin with.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'm not going to debate that. I would just remind members that supplementaries should follow up on original questions.

Minister of Health.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would like to go back to the original questions, which focused on the enhancement of primary care services, the announcement that we made today, and also there was some indication that certainly there are populations within the province that are underserved. I would just like to quote Dr Brian Gamble, chief of medical staff of three hospitals in Chatham and Wallaceburg, who indicated on May 26, 1998, in the London Free Press, "This program" — meaning our new primary care program — "will mean more doctors in underserved areas." I couldn't have said it any better.

The Speaker: New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I also have a question about the so-called primary care reform, and I wonder where the reform is. We listened to the minister's announcement today, and she tried to say that under her primary care pilot projects people can expect newborn care. I thought you could already get newborn care. Then she said that people can expect printed educational material on smoking hazards. You can already get that. Then she said people can expect that their doctor will admit them to hospital when they need it. As far as I know, Ontario's health care system used to deliver that.

Primary care is about providing wider ranges of health care and wider ranges of health care practitioners; it's about preventive care; it's about allowing physicians or at least enhancing the ability of physicians to do care in the home. Why aren't any of these things in your so-called primary care paper?

Hon Mrs Witmer: It's obvious that the leader of the third party missed where I indicated in my comments that we would be encouraging, and this funding formula would be supporting, home care supervision and also preventive medicine.

The other features of the program that has been introduced today include expanded access to on-call services, enhanced prevention services for all patients, evening and weekend office hours, after-hours telephone advice from a registered nurse, improved use of technology. All of the physicians' offices that are going to be participating in the program are going to have access to new technology that will allow for the computerization of patient records. At the end of the day the system will invite patients to roster, enrol, and there will be increased accountability between the physician and the patient, so certainly services will be enhanced and there will be greater accessibility to service.

Mr Hampton: Minister, that's what you say, but physicians are already writing to you and they're already saying that it's not going to do the job. For example, this is a letter from a Dr Alan Fegelman, who practises here in Toronto. Many of his patients are elderly, and he writes:

"I am a family doctor in Ontario.... I am deeply concerned about the change in the new schedule of benefits, that drastically reduces the fee for house calls...."

"I do not know why the OMA and your government want to discourage house calls, and I am especially surprised that with primary care reform and hospital restructuring" — in other words, pushing people out of the

hospital, sending them home — “where there will be much more emphasis on treating people at home....”

One would think that real primary care would provide some incentives for physicians to actually do those house calls, since those very same people have been pushed out of hospital, but the incentives are not here. How do you square that with your so-called primary care reform?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think it's very important to just quote Dr Orovan, who indicated, as a result of the announcement today, that this is particularly significant, because at a time when the population is growing and aging, this is an important step in looking at new ways of improving access to services. In fact, it is the elderly and it is others who will be involved in home care who will now have the opportunity to have access to those services as they have never, ever had access before.

I also want to emphasize the fact that the reason these five communities are participating is because these communities have indicated an interest in these programs. These are all voluntary and for the physicians who are going to be involved and the patients who are going to be involved, it's a voluntary commitment. I don't know why you would be opposed to the Wawa community wanting to be involved in the primary care pilot project.

1430

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): There are some very real reasons why we are saying this falls far short of your glitzy little statement about what it does. This doesn't reform primary care. All it does is set up a rostering measure with no controls. People in Ontario don't want a rostering system that is going to lead to creaming. In other words, those who are most ill and most difficult for physicians to deal with may voluntarily not be part of this experiment.

You have set this up in such a way that all the worst problems around rostering can occur here with no limits at all. Your reform announcement doesn't reform anything. What you are simply doing is recycling a bunch of primary care measures that are already practised in other places, but without some of the controls that those community-based measures have.

It is not a reform and the biggest question is: Where is the funding mechanism that is really going to lead to primary care reform?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The initiative that was announced today, the five communities that were announced today, there were indications that we are actually leaders when it comes to providing this enhanced model of primary care services to people. We are leaders, not only in this province but we are leaders in Canada.

In fact, it means that when individuals make a commitment, they will have the access to the services of the physician and the other members of the health team. This is a tremendous step forward and it will certainly ensure that we are able to provide people in this province with high-quality, accessible services 24 hours a day.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question today is to the Chair of Management Board. Yesterday, we asked the Premier about how some of the Conservative Party's friends are benefiting from a great deal of public money.

We wanted to know how a third-ranked casino bid by the Falls Management team got bumped up to become the successful bidder. The bid doesn't contain a substantial convention facility, it's not what the people of the Niagara region want and it doesn't recognize the importance of tourism to the Niagara region. However, the part-owners of Falls Management are the Latner family, who gave \$48,000 to your party in the last election. This has the appearance of influence-buying.

Minister, can you tell us how an inadequate, third-ranked bid by Conservative Party fund-raisers got bumped up to the top of the list to become the successful bid for the Niagara casino?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): To the Leader of the Opposition, I am told his facts are wrong, that this process was similar to a process used by the NDP in how they awarded casinos, and this was the best proponent viewed by the selection committee and by the review panel that looked at it.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Who's on the take?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): That's unparliamentary, the heckle. I would ask you to withdraw.

Mr Kormos: I withdraw, “Who's on the take?”

Mr Hampton: Minister, if you are so sure this is a fair and open process, who don't you open up the books and let the public see all of the process? While you're at it, maybe you could explain how another Latner company, a company called Gamma-Dynacare, got a very sweetheart deal from your government in terms of health labs.

Earlier this year, you changed the regulations as to how privately funded health labs in this province are paid. You put a cap on the individual labs, where there used to be a cap on the industry. When you put the cap on the smaller labs, you took away their business and you gave it to Gamma-Dynacare, which is owned by the same Latner family, the same family that gave you \$48,000 in the last election.

Can you tell us, Minister, why it is that you gave such a sweetheart deal there to your Conservative Party fund-raisers?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I'll refer this question to the Minister of Health.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): We dealt with this issue yesterday. I want to indicate again that first of all, the industry cap that was brought forward on lab billings was introduced during the time of the NDP. They worked with the Ontario Association of Medical Laboratories, and we have continued to work with them and have brought forward a corporate cap proposal that was the initiative of the association. We are continuing to

cooperate with that association, as the two previous governments did.

Mr Hampton: That was an attempt at an explanation, but it was no answer. The fact remains that the Latner family gave \$48,000 to the Conservative government. They are now getting a big chunk of the Niagara casino, you changed the health lab regulation to reward them as well, and it doesn't end there. We discovered that in terms of charity gaming casinos, Gaming Venture Group will be one of the permanent charity gaming clubs. Who owns Gaming Venture Group? It's owned by Greenwin/Shiplake, which is controlled by Greenwin Property Management, which is controlled by the Latner family.

The people of Ontario need to know: Give \$48,000 to the Conservative Party at election time and you don't get one contract, you don't get two — you get three times at the public trough.

It looks like corporate influence peddling and it smells like corporate influence peddling. When are you going to stop rewarding your Conservative Party friends with public money?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would refer that to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Thank you, Mr Speaker. It's my turn.

As the third-party members know full well, this was an arm's-length process that went through the Ontario gaming commission.

Interjections.

1440

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: This is not the first time this has come up, obviously. We've answered this question several times before. The answer is going to be the same as it was last time. The selection process was carried out by a committee independent of political involvement. It was an arm's-length process. It was through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission. The technical evaluation committee reviewed and scored the bids. The committee consisted of representatives from the Gaming Control Commission, the Attorney General's —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Brant-Haldimand, if you stand on a point of order, I'll be very interested in hearing from you.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): If I say one word, I get blasted

The Speaker: No, I'm not —

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'll guarantee you that was not me dinging you. I was not dinging you. I just thought you wanted a point of order. I thought you were up on a serious point of order.

Mr Preston: No, I would have stood up for that.

The Speaker: It wasn't a serious one? Okay.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Now it sounds to me like you're having a debate with me. I don't want to have a debate.

Minister?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: As I was saying, the technical evaluation committee reviewed and scored the bids. The committee consisted of representatives from the Gaming Control Commission, the Attorney General's office, the OPP and outside experts from auditors. A member of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission board reviewed the committee's process and procedures. The outside experts were satisfied the process was fair and objective.

TEXTBOOKS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Minister of Education. No one has been able to understand why you put in place such a bizarre and unworkable process for buying our elementary schools their textbooks. The publishers don't understand how they can produce good books with the timelines you've given, the boards don't understand how they can make good choices for their students, and teachers have no idea what they're going to be teaching with come September.

But now we know why you are in such an incredible hurry to spend your \$100 million. You want to make sure there is a photo opportunity for your members for back-to-school time in September. This memo from the Upper Grand District School Board to its elementary school principals says it all. "Schools will schedule photo ops with their local MPPs on September 7 to present the new textbooks."

Minister, why are you forcing school boards to purchase less than adequate textbooks so that your Tory MPPs can have a photo opportunity in September?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): We simply want to ensure that our students in Ontario at the elementary level have the best possible books in time for a September startup for classes this fall.

This is a good-news story, in that we are investing \$100 million. I don't know why the Liberals are opposed to us investing \$100 million in our elementary schools, in textbooks and resources for our elementary students.

Mrs McLeod: So a scandal will once again expose the Harris government. Minister, your real interest is not in education; your government's only interested in public relations. This is all about marketing your government's agenda. You are a whole lot —

Interjections.

Mrs McLeod: I say to the minister that it is clear you are a whole lot more concerned about having the trillium logo stamped on every one of your new shiny textbooks than you are about the content of the textbooks. This also makes clear that all textbooks purchased will have the trillium stamped on them, presumably to try and convince people —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister for Management Board, minister for social services, will you

please come to order. Member for Hamilton West, come to order, please, and Scarborough East.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, I want to ask you, in the name of quality education — you know that the timelines you've put in place do not allow boards to choose the best quality books for students. You know that boards aren't even going to have a list of the books in time to make those choices.

I'm going to ask you: What will happen to the \$100 million if boards simply cannot meet your deadlines? I want you to give an absolute assurance today that boards can take whatever time they need to choose the best books for the students in the classroom, even if they miss the deadline for your photo op in September.

Hon David Johnson: This government is going to ensure that the best possible investment will be made in our elementary students, that the best possible books, in line with the new curriculum, will be invested in our classrooms at the earliest opportunity. I think that can be arranged for September when our students go back to school.

We can always rely on the Liberals for the facts. A few weeks ago they were saying the Americans were going to write the secondary school curriculum. Wrong. A week ago they said the Americans were going to be the publishers of all the textbooks. Wrong again. No American publishers are involved. Now apparently they're against the thrillium and are against buying books for elementary students.

This government is going to ensure a proper and excellent investment in our elementary students in the fall in Ontario.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I have a question to the acting Premier. It's regarding Bill 16, the property tax bill. Minister, we have tried to point out to you a couple of times in the House the problems this bill is going to cause both for homeowners and for small businesses.

We now have the city of Toronto asking for public hearings because this bill is going to mean a big tax hike for homeowners. We have the Association of Municipalities of Ontario also asking for hearings.

As I'm sure you know, we have also the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers — these are not politicians, but the people who actually have to administer this piece of legislation — saying to you that this piece of legislation is unworkable. They have in fact sent your government 12 pages in which they outline legislative mistakes that have been made where references should be to some bills and to others.

We understand that you don't intend to have this bill go to committee. Will you, on the face of the advice that you're getting from the people who are going to have to administer this, reconsider and see the wisdom in sending this bill at least to committee for a short period of time?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development

and Mines): Of course we'll listen and take your concerns and the concerns of Metro Toronto to the Minister of Finance. But I can tell you that we both have been listening to small business owners. That's the reason why we've allowed, through the Legislature, that municipalities can choose to cap the increases at 2.5% for whatever reason.

You're saying that will squeeze out an increase on the residential side, but I can tell you that Toronto has already announced no increase in their budget for this year. They've already said they see no reason why they cannot hold the line and not raise taxes in the next two years. So it shouldn't be a problem if they choose to do this.

1450

Mr Silipo: I appreciate that the acting Premier may not have the detailed knowledge that the Minister of Finance would were he here, but I have to say to him and ask him to convey back to the Minister of Finance the fact that this is not about whether municipalities have the choice or not. Yes, we understand that they have the choice. This is about the fact that even if they exercise that choice, the legislation as drafted is unworkable. That's not my opinion, Minister; that's the opinion of the administrators in the local municipalities who have to administer this. They have said that committee hearings are absolutely necessary if this bill is to be fixed. They say that the bill as drafted is in some respects unworkable and will lead to a "political and administrative nightmare." That's what they're saying.

I want to say again to the minister, we understand the time pressures; quite frankly, time pressures that you have caused yourselves. But for a few more weeks you could have this bill in committee where it belongs and we could fix the problems we now are seeing in this bill so that you don't have to bring in a fifth bill some time in the fall to fix the problems in the property tax system. Will you reconsider and do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Hodgson: We had consultations on Bill 106 and Bill 149, which this letter that you refer to addresses. They have had consultations on that. The specific cap to try to keep small business owners' increases, for whatever reason, below 2.5% is the concern we heard from small business owners across Ontario and particularly in Metropolitan Toronto.

I recall looking through the glass like Alice in Wonderland when your leader was out there pretending he represented small business owners. We listened to that. It's our government that doesn't believe in tax hikes; we believe in tax decreases. What Metro is saying is that if they choose to implement the 2.5% and they don't raise their spending, they should be able to live with it. If there are technical problems, I will pass it on to the Minister of Finance and he will consider that.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): My question is directed to the Minister of Education and Training. Over the last few years there have been ongoing negotia-

tions between Ottawa and Ontario regarding a new proposed agreement for settlement costs for newcomers, for training and retraining costs related to those new people coming to the greater Toronto region. It seems to me this has been going on for a long time. When are we going to get to the state of having an actual negotiated outcome on these vital issues?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale because this has been something of considerable concern to this government.

All other provinces across Canada have had the opportunity to negotiate with the federal government a labour market and training agreement, and for some reason the federal government has left Ontario to the very tail end. I don't know why the federal government has taken that attitude but I am pleased to say that now we have been able to get the attention of the federal government and get them back to the table.

I hope that over the next short while we will be able to reach an agreement to address the skills shortages in Ontario, to reduce the overlap that exists between federal and provincial programs and to help more people in Ontario get back to work.

Mr Hastings: My supplementary revolves around the very point the minister is making. Ontario and the greater Toronto region is probably the most dynamic economic area in terms of being a magnet for newcomers to this country, yet we have a federal government which is still not dealing with the upfront vital issues of costs and getting a resolution to this particular dilemma.

When do you expect we'll see a practical, ongoing, specific agreement dealing with these issues that stops the discrimination against newcomers to this area who need this vital help in terms of the cost for newcomer programs, in terms of the cost of English as a second language? When can we get a negotiated outcome that's successful for these people?

Hon David Johnson: It can't happen soon enough as far as I'm concerned. I can only pledge to the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale and members of this House that I will be in there pitching for Ontario because the unemployed in the province deserve the same consideration as citizens across the rest of this country of Canada. In the other provinces, they've been able to negotiate with the federal government. Now we have the attention of the federal government.

We would like, for example, to double the number of entrances into the apprenticeship program. We think if we can coordinate this program, bring it into the province of Ontario, focus on the needs of the people of Ontario, then we can double the number of entrants into the apprenticeship program, we can reduce the overlap, reduce the cost of the coordinated program. We think we can assist 30,000 more people to gain training and skills and assist them to get back to work in Ontario.

TVONTARIO

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): My question is to the minister responsible for privatization. Minister, on the matter of TVOntario privatization, your government continues to show absolute disregard for the voice of the public. Yesterday, during a speech outside the Legislature, you dismissed the report by the TVO community panel which showed overwhelming public support for TVO by musing publicly about your government's move to privatize TVOntario. The headline in today's paper says it all: "TVO Up for Sale."

It has been almost four months since the report by Sheldon Levy showed massive opposition to selling off TVOntario. It has been almost a year since your government began its privatization review, yet we continue to see a government making the rules as they go along in a so-called public process that doesn't reflect public opinion at all.

Minister, my question is this: Who is writing your government's policy on TVO, when will the public be told of your plans and when will you stop playing games with the future of TVOntario?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): First of all, the member opposite, and the people watching today, should be aware of the fact that we have not made a decision on TVO yet. In spite of what the headline may say, if you read the content of the speech I delivered, I was quite clear on that.

What the member should also know is that we are giving full consideration to all the views that are provided to us through the consultation process, and it has been an open process, where we've invited the panel and other Ontarians to provide their opinions, either directly to me or through other members of this Legislature to me or to the secretariat directly. We intend to listen to those opinions as we take a look at the options and decide exactly what the nature of TVO should be in the future. Clearly that's what we're trying to do.

Mr Gravelle: The people of Ontario have spoken very clearly. The only thing clear about your response is that your government is now just saying, "Forget public opinion; forget that millions of Ontarians support our public television network." This is all happening simply because your Tory government made an irresponsible election promise to sell off TVO. Minister, I, like supporters of public television all across Ontario, fear that you will impose change to TVO just for the sake of change; that it's not your intention to recognize the importance of a legacy built up by and for the people of Ontario for 27 years.

I'll repeat my questions to you; they're very important. But I want to ask you specifically this in my supplementary: Will you commit today to at least publicly, in this Legislature, not outside the Legislature, make your intentions very clear, not wait till the summertime, when we are out of session, to make any announcements, make your position clear in the Legislature and tell us what is going

to happen to TVOntario in this province? Tell us now. Tell us publicly.

Hon Mr Sampson: Again, there have been no decisions made, so I can't clearly tell you what the decision will be. Even a member of your own caucus, and maybe you should caucus again to have a little discussion among yourselves, suggested quite publicly that all we're doing is delivering on our commitment to review the status of that particular asset. That came from one of the members of your very own caucus on a TV program not long ago. So you might want to get together and have a chat about this particular asset.

I should say to the honourable member across the floor, clearly when we make a decision, we'll do what we can to deliver it to the people of Ontario. At this point in time, we have not made a decision. We're taking our time so we get it right. That may not be what you would have done, but that's what we're going to do.

1500

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Minister of Education and Training. At a time when this House is intending this evening to debate the Calgary framework, when the Premier of this province says, at least in some of his statements, that we should be reaching out to the people of Quebec, particularly the francophone community in Quebec; at a time when we are, all of us hopefully, working for the unity of this great country, how does this minister justify his so-called funding formula, which is really a cutting formula, setting up a system which cuts out core French programs in the English elementary schools of this province?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): The funding formula no longer funds core French in grades 1 to 4. However, it maintains the same number of hours, 600 hours at the elementary level. So the net effect is that the boards have more flexibility in terms of how they provide it.

I must say that moneys in the classroom, whether used for French or mathematics or anything else, have actually increased, so boards have greater flexibility to establish the kind of programs that they feel would be necessary and, within that framework, they have an obligation for exactly the same number of hours of French at the elementary level.

Mr Wildman: Surely the minister knows that most studies indicate that the earlier a child has an opportunity to be exposed to a second language the better in terms of the individual's ability to learn. Wouldn't it make sense, particularly when we say that we are interested in preserving the linguistic duality of our country, that we should be doing everything possible to ensure as many Ontarians as possible have an opportunity to learn the second official language? Why is it that this government has determined that, at the very time when kids can learn another language more easily, it is no longer mandatory in

grades 1 to 4 to have core French programs and is not prepared to fund them?

Hon David Johnson: To the contrary: The requirement for the number of hours of French at the elementary level is unchanged at 600. Classroom moneys have actually increased. Every board in Ontario will get more moneys to go into the classroom for various components such as teachers and textbooks and everything else that will help not only in a French program but any other program. Perhaps the third party doesn't have confidence in the local schools and the local school boards and the local trustees.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): It is you we don't have confidence in.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Member for Lake Nipigon, come to order, please.

Mr Pouliot: Minister for Lake Nipigon?

The Speaker: No, the member for Lake Nipigon. Minister.

Hon David Johnson: I have confidence that within the parameters they are given, the 600 hours, which is exactly the same, and with the fact that they have more money than they've had in the past for the classroom, our school boards will make the best decisions for our students in Ontario.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, you announced the 1998 summer jobs plan on April 15, to help more than 3,000 rural young people find jobs this year. I'm interested in having an update as to where the program is, as I'm sure the opposition would be interested.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): You're wrong.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank my colleague from Lambton for that question. Yes, there is good news on the employment front for students in spite of the fact that the member for Riverdale doesn't want to hear it.

Ms Lankin: Beaches-Woodbine.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Beaches-Woodbine, sorry.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I don't either, though.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Since April 15 more than 3,600 rural youth have found employment in the student employment program sponsored by the ministry. We have exceeded the target early and we are still under budget. Our rural youth are benefiting from our plan to reduce taxes, to reduce government spending, and indeed it's showing.

Shown here in the London Free Press: "Summer Jobs are Sprouting: Hot Economy Means More Work for More Students." There are more jobs in all areas.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: The economic recovery has inspired many younger students to look for work earlier when they might not even have bothered. We are the first government to recognize the importance of expanding —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Beaubien: The summer jobs plan certainly appears to be working. However, in rural Ontario we do have a unique situation —

Interjections.

Mr Beaubien: The opposition may think it is hilarious. It is difficult to maintain young people in rural Ontario because of a lack of job opportunities. Minister, what is your ministry doing to provide opportunity and job opportunities in the future for young people in rural Ontario?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I am very pleased to again remind the House that we've had the rural youth advisory program, which has provided not only good advice but indeed \$35 million has gone to a rural youth employment program which will help keep our rural youth where they were born and raised, out in rural Ontario, instead of having them drift into the urban centres and maybe never return.

To quote the rural youth report, "Many rural students did not know the kind of skills they had which employers are looking for — initiative, loyalty, honesty, among others." That's the quality of rural youth that we have and certainly we're going to build on that to make sure that our rural roots in Ontario remain strong.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): In the absence of the Minister of Health, I want to go to the Deputy Premier. The destruction commission has rolled through Hamilton and has recommended the closure of the Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital. What you have done through this recommendation is sold out 1,200 full-time and part-time psychiatric patients at this facility, you've abandoned 600 professional health care workers who are at risk of losing their jobs as a result of this. You are recommending a move to St Joseph's Hospital at an additional cost of \$40 million.

Patients have told us that they are concerned about the lack of services, the loss of privileges, the loss of green space, the loss of beds and the loss of social programs. This decision is devastating to psychiatric patients in Hamilton. You are simply trying to save a few dollars on the backs of the most vulnerable.

Minister, the court ruling of April 18, 1997, gave the Minister of Health the full power to make reverse recommendations in regard to psychiatric hospitals. Will you live up to the commitment made by the Premier, who said, "Not one hospital closure in Ontario," and reverse the decision of the destruction commission and save Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I just wanted to say that I will pass on the member's specific concerns to the Minister of Health

when she returns. I can say, though, that the health care restructuring commission, as you recall, is an arm's-length commission that's looking at modernizing our health system to meet the needs —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order, order.

Hon Mr Hodgson: The health care restructuring commission's recommendations for this area have been generally well-received. It's good news. There are a lot of capital dollars to be reinvested in new MRI machines.

As everyone knows, Ontario has a large health system and we want to modernize it and move it from the acute care to the community care side and provide services to people when they need them, where they need them. It takes some time, and we've been very fortunate to have the assistance of the health care restructuring commission to take that on.

Mr Agostino: You don't understand the issue. Clearly, if you recall, the divisional court ruling of April 18, 1997, does not give the restructuring commission final power over psychiatric hospitals. That rests with you, your cabinet and your government. It is your responsibility. You can't pass this off to the restructuring commission. The courts have told you that.

Minister, you said it's good news. I can't understand why you would tell 1,200 patients who receive service at HPH that the fact you're going to close this first-class facility is good news. We're clearly moving to discount health care again here. You're trying to save a buck on the backs of the most vulnerable people in this province, in the city of Hamilton: psychiatric patients.

Clearly by the examples we have seen in northern Ontario and across Ontario, psychiatric patients end up in jail because there are no beds in facilities. You are now going to close even further beds with this move in Hamilton. Again, Minister, let me ask you one more time: Will you use the powers given to you by the courts last year, stand up to the word of the Premier and reverse the decision today to close Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital, or are you going to abandon psychiatric patients —

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I think everyone realizes the member has some particular concerns about change. The good news here, and I don't know why he's opposed to this, is that the health care restructuring commission is recommending a \$1.4-million reinvestment in mental health in the Hamilton-Wentworth region. That's 17 new paediatric and adolescent mental health beds. I don't know why he's against seven more acute mental health beds, going from 82 to 89. I'm not sure why he's against no reduction in the number of —

Mr Agostino: Why are you closing the hospital? You said you weren't going to, Jim.

The Speaker: Order, member for Hamilton East.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): It is not closing.

Mr Agostino: It is not closing?

Hon Mr Wilson: Amalgamating services.

Mr Agostino: It is not closing?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, come to order, please. I'm not going to warn you again. Come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Will you people come to order as well. I'm sick of hearing that too. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I just want to add that I'm not clear why the member of the Liberal Party is against the recommendation to increase the reinvestment in mental health transfers to \$3.5 million, the community-based programs. I will pass along to the Minister of Health that he's opposed to all this good news

1510

TVONTARIO

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): My question is to the minister of privatization. Today you have been quoted in the press as saying that TVOntario will be at least partially privatized. As we hear it, you were quoted by the Toronto Sun as saying this: "You need to find the right role for the private sector in these transactions." Clearly that leaves the door open, we fear, to privatization.

You say you're not saying that. You're saying, of course, that you haven't made a decision, that you're taking your time, yet you make statements of that nature that lead people to believe you are on that road to privatization. This committee that drafted this report on TVOntario, the Community Forum Panel, wrestled this issue to the ground. You're trying to resurrect it over and over again. They clearly said, "With few exceptions, we heard an endorsement of TVOntario as an entity serving the public good and worthy of continued support."

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mr Marchese: You have a duty not to go on a personal privatization binge that runs contrary to the wishes of the people who spoke against the privatization of TVO. Give them —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): As I said earlier, we have not made a decision on TVO. The member may be musing about where he himself would take TVO and I would welcome his input on that, as I would welcome the input from people all over Ontario.

I say to him quite clearly, though, that if he were to take a look at TVO and understand its business as we have been trying to do over the last few months, he would see that TVO is partnering with the private sector in a number of ways; in fact the board itself struck a task force to review different ways to restructure its organization and suggested that we consider other options to expand the private sector's role in TVO. I don't hear the honourable member suggesting that perhaps the board was misguided, unless he would like to make that statement right now.

PETITIONS

TVONTARIO

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): Speaking of TVO, I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads:

"Whereas TVOntario is owned by the people of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has opposed public support for maintaining TVO as a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster by putting TVO through a privatization review; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has not confirmed that full public participation will be part of this privatization review;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold open and honest public consultations with the people of Ontario before making a decision on the future of TVO."

I have attached my name to that petition as well.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I've got a petition with thousands and thousands of signatures addressed to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and Legislative Assembly of Ontario which is titled "Keep Our Young Offenders' Services Professional and Public." It reads:

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services, Janet Ecker, has announced that she will sell the services and programs at Ontario's secure custody facilities for high-risk young offenders to the private sector; and

"Whereas this decision will move these important services away from the government's responsibility to ensure the safety and security of the public, the young people in their charge and the workers who supervise and provide treatment to young offenders; and

"Whereas we believe strongly that elected officials should be directly accountable and responsible for all children and adults who are in custody as ordered by the courts of Ontario and that no private company should profit from crime;

"We urge the minister to keep our secure and treatment facilities for young offenders professional and public."

Signed by thousands of citizens of this province, and I've added my signature in full support of this most worthy petition.

PROTECTION FOR
HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 49 people.

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas the health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services is currently engaged in a restructuring process across all communities in Ontario which will affect all people and their families supported by developmental services; and

"Whereas the consultation process was selective and limited; and

"Whereas those who require services are being pitted against those who have services; and

"Whereas service to one group should not be at the expense of another, regardless of age or language; and

"Whereas the MCSS 'corporate agenda' is one of wholesale destruction of the support system for the vulnerable; and

"Whereas this corporate agenda will threaten the health, safety and likely the lives of many disabled people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to stop this destructive restructuring project and provide adequate funding for quality services to the developmentally disabled."

This petition was signed by many people in Whitby and Oshawa, so I'm very happy to present that.

1520

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition forwarded to me by Nancy Hutchison, the health and safety coordinator for the United Steelworkers, District 6. It's signed by hundreds of steelworkers such as Darren Green from my home town of Hamilton and virtually across the entire province. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas each year in Ontario approximately 300 workers are killed on the job, several thousand die of occupational diseases and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas during the past decade the Workers' Health and Safety Centre proved to be the most cost-effective WCB-funded prevention organization dedicated to worker health and safety concerns; and

"Whereas the WCB provides over 80% of its legislated prevention funding to several employer-controlled safety associations and less than 20% to the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre recently lost several million dollars in funding and course revenue because of government changes to legislated training requirements; and

"Whereas 30% of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre staff were laid off due to these lost training funds; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre now faces an additional 25% cut to its 1998 budget, which will be used to augment new funding for employer safety associations in the health, education and service sector; and

"Whereas the WCB's 1998 planned baseline budget cuts for safety associations and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre will be disproportionately against the workers' centre and reduce its 1998 budget allocation to less than 15% of the WCB prevention funding,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the WCB's proposed cuts and direct the WCB to increase the Workers' Health and Safety Centre's funding to at least 50% of the WCB's legislated prevention funding; and

"Further, we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the WCB to significantly increase its legislated prevention funding in order to eliminate workplace illness, injury and death."

I proudly continue to support these petitioners by adding my name.

ABORTION

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I have a petition here signed by nearly 100 people.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario's taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million; and

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

I am happy to affix my signature in support of this petition.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas the health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves; and

"Therefore we, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

This is signed by over 100 of my constituents.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which essentially deals with the previous petitioner's about the health care system, urging the government of Ontario to

enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers.

It has 15 signatures on it, and I affix my signature to it.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition related to the need for long-term-care facilities in the province, especially in Thunder Bay and district:

"Whereas Thunder Bay and district are suffering from serious deterioration in our health care system because of the closing of hospital beds before community services and long-term-care facilities are available;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make it an urgent priority to provide more long-term-care services in the home and to provide a sufficient number of long-term-care institutional beds and staff in order to restore the standards of health care to an acceptable level."

I'm very pleased to sign my name to the petition, signed by hundreds of people in my riding.

ABORTION

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I have a petition that reads:

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury, or illness, and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

RENT REGULATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My petition reads as follows, and it's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has brought forth Bill 96, legislation which will effectively kill rent control in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris campaign literature during the York South by-election stated that 'rent control will continue'; and

"Whereas tenant groups, students and seniors have pointed out that this legislation will hurt those who can least afford it, as it will cause higher rents across most markets in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris proposal will make it easier for residents to be evicted from retirement care homes; and

"Whereas the Liberal caucus continues to believe that all tenants, and particularly the vulnerable in our society who live on fixed incomes, deserve the assurance of a maximum rent cap;

"We, the undersigned, demand that the Mike Harris government scrap its proposal to abandon and eliminate rent control and introduce legislation which will protect tenants in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature, as I'm in full agreement.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Bill Grimmert (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I have a petition today signed by approximately 57 of my constituents. In my usual fashion, I'll abide by the rules and simply summarize the petition by saying that it petitions for the protection of the right to hunt black bear in Ontario. I'd like to file that petition today.

TVONTARIO

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): The people of Ontario have made it very clear that they are opposed to the privatization of TVOntario. We have many petitions that are coming in, in relation to that. The petition reads:

"We, the undersigned, oppose any plans to privatize TVOntario and strongly support TVO's proposal to convert the agency to a not-for-profit corporation. We, the undersigned, strongly urge the government of Ontario to ensure continued access by Wahsa and Wawatay radio to TVO's distribution system. The privatization of TVOntario would jeopardize the excellent educational and informational programming provided by TVOntario. The sale of TVO to commercial interests would also jeopardize Wawatay radio network's native language programming, and Wahsa's distance education services, because both depend on TVO's distribution system."

I'm pleased to sign this petition as well.

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): I'd like to present a petition from almost 200 citizens in the city of Guelph regarding chiropractic service. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize that dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care provided by chiropractors is worthwhile and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

I submit this on their behalf.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, before I call the orders of the day, I'd like to indicate to members who might be interested in the Calgary framework that we will be calling government notice of motion number 10 this evening.

With respect to these proceedings, I believe we have unanimous consent to conduct them in this fashion: that the time will be divided equally among the three parties; that at 9:25 pm or at the conclusion of the debate, whichever is earliest, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put the question without further debate or amendment; and that, if a recorded vote is requested, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes, and there shall be no deferral of the vote pursuant to standing order 28(h). I seek unanimous consent for that.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Agreed? Agreed.

1530

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAX CUTS FOR PEOPLE AND FOR SMALL BUSINESS ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES IMPÔTS DES PARTICULIERS ET DES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 15, An Act to cut taxes for people and for small business and to implement other measures contained in the 1998 Budget / Projet de loi 15, Loi visant à réduire les impôts des particuliers et des petites entreprises et à mettre en oeuvre d'autres mesures contenues dans le budget de 1998.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm pleased to have a chance to join in this debate. I want to indicate that I will be doing the leadoff on this, which was deferred on the first day, and that, further, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Hamilton Centre.

I'm glad to have the chance to speak on Bill 15. I guess we will find out in due course what actually is going to happen with this bill. As we understand things now, we probably will get a chance to examine this bill in some greater detail in committee. It's ironic because this week we also will be debating another bill which was the subject of one piece of the government's budgetary framework, and that had to do with Bill 16, the property tax bill.

That bill is the one that I think you could argue that, between the two, is the one that should go to committee because of the problems — let alone the political differences — that there are on that, just the fundamental drafting errors and problems that the administrators in the

municipalities who will have to implement that legislation are telling us are there.

The government is saying so far that they not only will not send that bill to committee, but we expect they will file a time allocation motion to close debate on that by the end of this week, whereas on this bill it looks like we may actually get a chance to debate it further, not just here but in committee. If that's the case, then obviously we look forward to that discussion.

Today I want to set out some of our views on this bill. This is the bill that implements the major provisions of the budget: the remainder of the 30% income tax cut and the reductions in the business tax for small businesses. It does a couple of other interesting things that we actually support.

One important thing it does is that it repeals the video lottery terminal legislation, something we had advocated. I have to say that we have had, and still have, some concerns about why that particular piece is in this bill, which is after all a budget bill, unless the government has finally conceded that the only reason for the VLT legislation existing was to bring in the money to the provincial coffers. That's what they've admitted by putting that section in this bill. That piece reflects the things we have been saying: that those provisions regarding the video lottery terminals should not proceed, given that the government has taken the position it has. We're happy to see that piece in the legislation.

There are a couple of other pieces in this bill that I find quite interesting. One is this whole issue of changing the Highway Traffic Act to raise the fine for failing to obey a red or amber light to \$150 from the current \$60. I suppose that on that particular point we don't have any problems; not only that, we think that may be a good idea. But we continue to say to the government, and we wonder, how it is that's going to become a deterrent — that simple increase in the fine — when the government continues to refuse to seriously look at the changes that need to be made to catch people in the first place who go through red or yellow lights. That's where the attention should be, not just on this question of increasing the amount of fines.

One other thing — which I suppose, on the one hand, is almost a laughing matter but of course it's more than that because it is quite serious — is the implementation through this bill of one of the announcements made, with great fanfare we might say, in the budget, which was that the government is now going to exempt the 25-cent pay phone calls that we all make from time to time from sales tax; in other words, that sales tax will no longer apply as it does now to that 25-cent call.

The interesting question around this is, how is that money going to find its way back into the hands of consumers? I haven't heard anybody, including the government and the Minister of Finance, say that they're going to ask Bell to reduce phone calls down to 23 cents because the difference is about two cents. I don't think, quite frankly, anyone would seriously contemplate that possibility. On the other hand, we don't see any provisions

to ensure that this is anything other than a windfall for Bell Canada.

This is something that we will want to pursue and will want to see the government try to do something to ensure that the money that Bell Canada now will no longer have to remit to the provincial government in the way of sales tax will somehow find its way back into the hands of the people who pay the phone bills, the consumers. That's something on which we are quite interested in seeing further action.

There are a number of other pieces that are in this bill, but of course we know, as I said earlier, that the two main pieces in the bill have to do with implementation of a cut in the corporate tax for small businesses, cutting the tax rate in half-point stages from the current 9.5% until it will reach 4.75% in January 2006, and I want to come back to that point in terms of what it means. The other issue is of course the final implementation of a 30% income tax cut.

To speak for a moment about the cut to the small business rate, again I have to say that in doing that, I for one look at that and say that I think that is a useful direction. What of course is troubling, is wrong, is inappropriate about what the government is doing is just the kind of slow way in which they're going about doing this.

If they were serious about reducing the burden on small businesses, the argument could be made that they could have done more on that front, but of course what we see in this announcement is something that we saw very often in many parts of the budget speech which, as I say, this bill now in large part implements, and that is that the government made all sorts of announcements in which they tried to paint a more positive picture of themselves and their actions. They tried essentially to say through those actions, "Look, we've gone through bad times and now here are the good times rolling in and this is the way in which we're able to now give back to people some further support and provide some further assistance."

As a message I suppose that is not a bad one, except that it doesn't quite hold because in many cases such as this, what the government has tried to do is to take in effect a nine- or 10-year announcement and present it as if they were implementing that all in one fell swoop. They're trying to bank on the benefits that will come from what the situation will be like at the end of that eight-, nine- or 10-year period, depending on the initiative, but of course in terms of the impact that it will have on the provincial coffers that will be minimal.

We saw that here. We saw that certainly in the health care spending announcement, the big announcement that was made a couple of days before the budget and then reiterated in the budget speech, which was that they were investing millions of dollars in long-term care. When you looked at what that actually meant over the next year or two, it was a mere fraction of the money that is needed, particularly when you put that against, for example, the hundreds of millions of dollars that the government stopped in long-term care in the three years they have been the government and at the time they first became the government in 1995.

The sheer reality is that at the end of the day, by the time their term of office is over, they will not even have reinvested in long-term care anywhere near the amounts of money that not only should be there but, quite frankly, would have been there had they left the commitments to funding and increased investments in that area in place as per decisions that had been made by the previous NDP government that I was proud to be a member of.

1540

That is typical of the way this government has acted. We know they froze or cut spending in a number of areas when they first came into office. What we are seeing in the latter part of their mandate is an attempt by them to try to sound as if now they're reinvesting.

If you look at the area of health care you just have to look at what is actually happening on a day-to-day basis for people to realize and for this government and its members to realize that they can spin the line all they want, but the reality out there is completely different. The reality out there is that people are hurting, the services aren't there, and what we are seeing is a government that is simply trying to carry its spin line and trying in effect to carry on as if things are now fine when they are not.

Even in an area in which all of us, I hope, want to be supportive, which is to say, "Yes, let's support small businesses," even and including by reducing the tax burden they have, let alone the whole red tape they have to go through — both actions that certainly, Madam Speaker, you will recall we took. In fact, I believe it was part of your direct responsibility as Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations to begin the process of reducing red tape for small business at the time, and certainly we don't have to take a back seat to anyone with respect to the approach that says small businesses need to be helped.

But we need only look at what this government has done to small businesses with respect to the whole property tax mess and to say to small businesses that certainly this government, while it continues to try to portray itself as a friend to small business, is far from being a friend to small business. Had they in fact been or were they in fact the friend of small business they purport to be, they would never have put small businesses in the kind of turmoil they did by letting things develop to the point where many of them would have actually gone out of business had the provisions continued.

Even now, as I said earlier, with the changes they have made and some of the improvements the government has finally made under Bill 16 on that front, we know there will be major problems in terms in implementing that which we will have to deal with. But, as I say, that is in the other bill and we will deal with that in whatever limited way we are able to.

But to come back to the issues that are directly here in Bill 15, the budget bill, let me come to what I think is the centrefold issue, and I think even the government members would say that this is their *raison d'être*. This is in fact the mainstay of their not only fiscal but political rationale for existing as a government. That is the 30% income tax cut,

which they believe is at the heart of everything they are doing and everything that needs to be done.

Let's take a look at what that means. First of all, for the average family, it means very little in the way of a benefit. What it means is that when you look at the typical family — not even a typical family; it's higher than the average typical family — making, say, \$60,000 with two family incomes, that family might at the end of the day see about \$1,000 less in provincial taxes at the end of the year. That sounds like a nice round amount, and who would not want to have their tax burden reduced by that amount or even higher amounts?

But when that same family, as a result of the actions of this government, also has to pay out in an assortment of ways far, far more than that \$1,000 they gain, then even that family will realize, and many more like them, that far from this being a benefit to them, it will actually end up costing them more. If they have children who are either going or aspiring to go to college or university, they are going to be paying thousands of dollars more just by the actions this government has taken now and will continue to take in tuition fees.

If they are seniors or have family members who are seniors, they are going to be paying more for basic medicines than they were paying before. If they are just a typical family living in a typical municipality, they are likely to be paying either more property taxes as municipalities have to deal with the downloading of many costs on to the property tax base, or they are going to be paying higher user fees in order to maintain those services, which is the other option that municipalities have or, quite frankly, they will find themselves with fewer services than they have now.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I think the member deserves to have a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Clerk, could you check and see if there is a quorum, please?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): On a further point of order, Madam Speaker: I would like to introduce, for those members in the House, somebody in the gallery today. Carol Keyes is here, the daughter of the former member Ken Keyes from Kingston and The Islands, and also the mother of one of our pages here, Lee. I think we should welcome her and her family.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order, but I'd like to welcome you anyway.

Mr Silipo: I certainly join in welcoming members of the public, because if they have a chance to be here in person or even to listen to us on television, they might actually see what is going on in terms of this government.

As we were debating Bill 15, the budget bill, I was talking about the impact the tax cut, which is the mainstay of what this government is doing, will have on the typical

family. I was using the example of a family making \$60,000 and pointing out that at the end of the day that family will end up paying more, not less, for services, and probably at the end of the day even fewer services than they enjoy today.

While I talked about a family with an income of \$60,000, the sheer reality is that half the taxpayers of the province earn less than \$35,000. If we want to talk about the real impact of this, we need to take a look at that half of the taxpayers for whom the positive impact of the tax cut — that is, money in their pockets — is going to be far less than that \$1,000 or \$1,100 I was talking about with respect to a family earning \$60,000. If you think that a family at \$60,000 is going to see no benefit from the tax cut, a family in a situation of \$35,000, \$40,000 or even less, and there we're talking about half the taxpayers of the province, are going to see not only no positive impact — not only are they not going to see any money in their pockets, but they are going to see a situation in which they are paying more.

And what are they paying more for? Well, they are paying more for all the services I outlined before, but they're also going to be paying so that a small fraction of taxpayers at the top end of the income scale will actually see the benefit of the income tax cut that this bill implements.

That's what the Mike Harris agenda is all about. It's not about redistributing wealth. It's not about creating jobs. It's about distributing the tax moneys from the middle class and the working class and the poorest families of our province to the richer citizens of our province. It is about redistributing wealth, but it's not about redistributing wealth in the sense that most people out there would think of when it comes to redistributing wealth. They usually think that if you're redistributing wealth, you're making things better for people of modest and low income; you're trying to bridge the gap between the richest and the poorest.

But no, the Mike Harris government is purposefully, consciously widening the gap between the richest and the poorest citizens of our province. It is so clear when you look at the impact of the tax cut.

1550

Of course, the big line from the government is, "People will reinvest this money." Have we seen any real evidence that that's happening? No. I don't expect members opposite to take my word as a member of the opposition. I ask them to take a look at the many economists, those who appeared before the finance committee and others who have spoken out in a variety of forums, who have said, "The tax cut is not creating jobs." If it's not creating jobs, what's the point of it?

If you recall, in the Common Sense Revolution, somewhere on page 1 or page 2, the essential reason for this tax cut, as the government stated, was that they were going to create some 725,000 jobs. That was the reason they were doing it. That's not the reason they're doing it, in my view. The reason they're doing it is because they are a

government that is ideologically bent in the wrong direction, to the right, a government that is —

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Twisted, one might say.

Mr Silipo: Twisted, my colleague from Hamilton Centre says. Twisted in what direction? Certainly not in the interests of the average Ontario family, certainly not in the interests of those 50% of taxpayers who make less than \$35,000, and not even in the interests of those Ontarians who might make \$60,000 individually or as families, or even \$70,000, because those aren't the families that are going to see any benefit from the actions of this government. They're the ones who are going to be paying for the shift in money and wealth from the average family into the hands of relatively few people in this province.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): They're the ones the NDP wants to tax more.

Mr Silipo: My colleague says, "They're the ones the NDP wants to tax." No, we don't. They're not. Let me be clear. Let me reassure the member that I'll talk about that. We have said very clearly that not only are we against this tax cut insanity that this government wants to implement, but we actually have gone one step further to the logical conclusion of saying you're against something, which is saying what you would do, therefore, as a result.

I want to say to my colleague from High Park-Swansea that we have said very clearly that we would take back a portion of the tax cut. We have said that. We have said that we would take back the portion of the tax cut that is applied to people making over \$80,000. That's what we have said.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): How much do MPPs make?

Mr Silipo: My friend asked, "How much do MPPs make?" That, interestingly enough, happens to be about where we are. Let me assure him that if we get the chance, if the voters are willing to implement that — when we talk about \$80,000, it's simply to round up the number, but let me assure him that it will be \$79,000-and-whatever that's going to cover each and every one of the MPPs, including the member opposite. We expect that when he sits on this side of the House he won't be making the additional salary of a parliamentary assistant but will still be covered by our position on the income tax cut.

The serious point here is this: that we believe as New Democrats that it is not appropriate for a government's actions to widen the gap between the richest and the poorest in our province. We believe a government should tax wisely, should tax in a way in which, yes, if we have to reduce the tax burden for taxpayers, that's something we need to be conscious of. I said earlier that we support the general direction of reducing the tax load on small businesses.

I'm sure some of the government members genuinely believe that on the tax front alone what they've been doing is a very good thing. But they need to look at the impact of this. They need to look at what is happening just on the tax cut alone. Even if you don't want to go the next step that I've been suggesting you need to and look at what is actu-

ally happening for you to find this money — because again, this is all borrowed money. This is not money the government has at its disposal. This is all borrowed money.

If they were seriously interested in making life better — I'm sure many of them share the intent to make life better for the average family in this province, but their actions and their policies will do the complete opposite. They might cater to 35%, 36%, 37% and maybe even up to 40% of the electorate. If that's their objective, then perhaps they're doing what they need to do, but it does not govern for the interests of the province as a whole.

Any time a government in this province takes steps that actually widen the gap between the richest and the poorest, then we are not moving in the correct direction. We are perhaps moving in the right direction from an ideological bent, but we are moving clearly in the wrong direction.

We have said very clearly that not only are we against the income tax cut because of what it has done and what it will continue to do — the decimation of many of our services; the fact that it's not according to many economists having the economic impact the government says it will have — but we would in fact undo a portion of that income tax cut that applies to that top 15% of taxpayers.

Mr Shea: Those families will lose their tax break.

Mr Silipo: The families that are making over \$80,000 would in fact be asked to put back the income tax portion and we would use that money to reinvest in education and health care. I say that because I believe it's important we be clear with people.

I continue to be puzzled at the position our Liberal colleagues have taken on this. They stand up day in and day out saying they are opposed to the tax cut and yet when it comes time to say, "What would you do with it or how would you pay for this reinvestment in education and in health care that we all believe needs to be done?" I don't hear from our Liberal colleagues any position that says they would take any portion of that tax cut back. What they are saying —

Mr Gerretsen: You haven't listened closely.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Silipo: I think I've listened pretty closely, and I have to listen even more closely to the fiscal notions as the finance critic for our party. I know the position the Liberal Party takes is that they believe that just simply through the growth in the economy there will be enough money to put back into education. There will be some money coming from growth. We're not denying that. There will be some money coming if the economy continues to grow. But what if the economy stops growing? What happens then?

Interjections.

Mr Silipo: I just want to say to my colleague opposite that if he or anybody across there, anybody in this House, quite frankly, thinks they can predict what the economy is going to be like three and four and five years from now, then I think they're either naïve or trying to fool people, because no one can with any great level of certainty predict what's going to happen three and four and five years

from now — maybe not even a couple of years from now, realistically. Obviously, we all hope the economy continues to improve, but it may not. This is where I think our Liberal colleagues have a real problem in the position they have taken.

Let me come back to a couple of other points. Even on the fiscal basis you have to kind of wonder — of course this is something the government members conveniently omit from their line of argument when they talk about the fact that they are investing in job creation through the tax cut. They conveniently forget or omit the fact that this is all borrowed money. This is a government that came in and said, "Remember those 10 lost years," as they like to talk about them, "the NDP government raised the debt," conveniently forgetting that we governed during the worst times since the 1930s. Here they come in and just to pay for the tax cut, they will have added, conservatively estimating, at least \$20 billion to the debt just to pay for the tax cut.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): You know that tax revenues have gone up.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Scarborough East.

Mr Silipo: So here's a government that says they want to reduce the debt, that they want to reduce the deficit, and what are they doing? They're increasing the debt. Here's a government that says they want to reduce the proportion of money we're spending to pay for the interest on the debt, and they're actually increasing that. That has actually increased from the time they took office.

1600

Mr Shea: What happened to the deficit?

Mr Silipo: My friend from High Park-Swansea wants to know what happened to the deficit. Well, there's another interesting story.

Mr Shea: What happened to the deficit?

Mr Silipo: The deficit of course has gone down. Of course. We admit the truth. In fact we also would be prepared to go one step further and say that had the government really wanted to be up front with people, they would have been able to admit in this budget that they could have actually brought the deficit down to zero by next year. More important than that, if they were really serious about reducing the deficit, they would have been able to do that as of this year had they not implemented this crazy tax cut of theirs. They would have been able to come in this year and say, "At the end of this fiscal year the deficit is down to zero."

We know there is in the budget anywhere from \$1 billion to \$2 billion of money that has been budgeted and not spent, largely under the category of restructuring. In this budget and in this bill that implements the budget the government has left its doors quite open. This is the pre-election budget. This is the pre-election budget bill.

Mr Shea: No, there are two more.

Mr Silipo: No, there won't be two more. If the member for High Park-Swansea thinks there are going to be two more, then I don't know what bill of goods he's been sold. There won't be two more. There may not even be one more, I say to the member.

What has happened with this budget and with this bill is that the government has left its doors neatly and conveniently open to call an election as early as this fall or as late as next spring. That's what's going to happen. That will be determined in part by a number of factors, including some things that might be happening later this fall, including what the reading is this fall and into early next spring about what the economy is actually going to do. Then we will see a situation —

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): The talk of an early election frightened the Liberals off.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Nepean, come to order.

Mr Silipo: I think it's interesting. One of the realities, I can say to members, and I say this in all sincerity and without presumption, is that having spent a bit of time in government, not everything is told by the powers that be to all of the members of the government, let alone all of the backbenchers. So let me say to them that if some of them believe they're going to have two more budgets before they go to the electorate, then we will see. Time will tell.

The long and the short of it is that this is a budget bill that is the pre-election budget, as I see it. It's a bill that leaves the door open to Mike Harris to decide when he's going to call the election. They could come back in the fall with an economic statement that says, "By the way, with our fiscal prudence, we've now found another billion and a half that we hadn't estimated in." Of course, that's a billion and a half that we know is coming from the federal government in the way of revenue that they haven't put into the estimates.

Where is the proof of that? Here is the proof: First of all, the proof is that that's what's happened over the last couple of years, so that's been the pattern.

Mr Baird: That's \$1.5 billion?

Mr Silipo: Yes, \$1.5 billion. This year it was closer to \$2 billion in terms of income tax. That's right.

If you need any more proof, here is the thing: The government is proudly proclaiming growth in the economy — I think it's 3.2% or some number to that effect — for next year. We agree that there will be growth; I'm not disputing that. What I want to say to the government members is this: Don't you find it a little odd that in a budget that says the economy is going to grow, you've actually estimated that the revenues going into the government from taxes are going to be lower than this year?

Mr Baird: Prudent.

Mr Silipo: That's not being prudent. That's not telling the whole story.

Mr Shea: We are still working on a 3% figure.

Mr Silipo: Some of the members opposite are saying they are going to be higher. Well, that's my point. They will be higher, but your numbers don't say that they're going to be higher. What will happen is that at some point during the year the Minister of Finance will come forward and say, "By the way, we've found another billion, another billion and a half, two billion dollars." Then they will have the option of saying: "That money's going to go

to the deficit. We're ready now to go to the people and we will see."

Whenever that happens, it will not change one bit the reality of the impact of the income tax cut which, as I say, is at the heart of what this bill implements. There are many things in this bill, but that's the essential piece, and the cost of that income tax cut is quite frankly not worth it. It's not worth it in terms of the money that has had to be cut from health care services, from social services, from education, which for the typical family out there is going to mean either or both of higher costs in property taxes or other user fees that Mike Harris used to call taxes and now says are not taxes, or less in the way of services. That's the sheer reality for the typical family out there, that's what's going to happen, and that's why we believe as New Democrats that what the government is doing is fundamentally wrong. It should not happen.

We would have wished that at least they had seen the wisdom of their ways and not proceeded with this final stage of the income tax cut, but quite frankly, I have been saying since the beginning of this government's term that if there was one promise they were going to keep, it's the 30% income tax cut, not because Mike Harris has staked so much of his reputation on that but because that's at the heart of this Reform-minded philosophy that's driving this government, and that is to redistribute wealth and power from the typical and average family into the hands of those few Ontarians who are at the top of the income tax scale. That's the reality, that's what this philosophy is all about, and at the end of the day, whenever the election comes, people will have an opportunity not only to pass judgement on the Mike Harris government and this right-wing, Reform-minded agenda but also to look at some of the alternatives.

This is where I ask people to look at what we are saying, because we believe the only real alternative to what Mike Harris is saying and doing is to put in place a government that would undo the greater part of this income tax cut, at least the part that applies to that top 15%, which gets us anywhere from \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion and allows us then the freedom to be able to reinvest back in education and social services.

People will be able to judge that against the actions of the Tories and, quite frankly, against the positions of the Liberal Party, who want to be the next government and who will say to people, "Yeah, we want to reinvest in education, health care and social services, but by the way, we're going to simply do it by wherever the money comes from." That is going to be the debate. There will be other issues that we'll certainly have a chance to talk about, but on the fiscal side and in terms of how those issues relate to the real services out there that people deal with on a day-to-day basis, outside the rhetoric of this place, in health care, in social services, in education, that's the juxtaposition that people will have to make. That's the comparison.

We believe those services are important enough that our tax dollars should be there to pay for them. We believe that if taking back some of the tax cut for that 15% of people who make over \$80,000, the top 15% of taxpayers

ers, will give us the money to be able to reinvest in those services, then that's what we are prepared to do and that's what we are prepared to go to the electorate with. We will let them judge that against the havoc that this government is causing and will have caused by then. We will let them judge that against the seeming position of the Liberal Party which says, "You can have it both ways," which says, "We want to reinvest, but we're not going to tax in order to get that money." It's kind of a dream world versus the harsh cut versus, we think, a more realistic approach that we present.

With that, I will conclude and allow my colleague to continue from there.

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity to follow the chief whip of our party in the opening comments on Bill 15. I think it's interesting to note that the second you ask Liberals, "How are you going to pay for your promises?" they vacate the building like somebody yelled "Fire!" There's not a single Liberal member here, and it was my recollection that all started when my colleague from Dovercourt —

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: It is quite the custom in this Parliament and others not to make references to absences in the House. The member knows better, and I would ask him to withdraw any comments of that nature.

The Deputy Speaker: I believe that is quite correct. In fact, the member should not refer to people —

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent that we could point out all afternoon that the Liberals aren't here. I would like to ask for unanimous consent.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Hamilton Centre, go ahead.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Speaker, and certainly I withdraw any unparliamentary remarks, but I think it is interesting that the focus for us and what makes it very difficult for the Liberals is to say: "Yes, there is an alternative to the way Mike Harris and the Tories run this province. We don't need this kind of pain. We don't need to be facing the kind of attack we are on our health care system, on our education system, on the environment, on labour laws, on social services etc. There is an alternative." But when you focus the question on, "What will you do as an alternative and how will you pay for it?" the Liberals come up shy, empty and hollow each and every time because they want the best of all worlds. They want to be able to say they oppose the mean-spirited budget cutting of the Tory government, but they want to keep in place the very tax cuts that forced those programs to be slashed.

1610

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The member for Hamilton Centre was making reference improperly about attendance in the House and so on. You would want to remind him, I know, that there were no NDP members in here for a vote one day on the tax cut.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for St Catharines, you just did yourself what I had already told the member for Hamilton was out of order, and you also are out of order.

Mr Christopherson: They're awfully thin-skinned. For a guy who has been around here for so long, I would have thought you would be used to the give and take of this place. But if you feel the need to wait until I'm in the middle of making a point to try to throw me off — that old gag, that old game — you go right ahead, Jim. That's your right. I think what really matters is that the question is not going to go away. You can ask for a point of order in the middle of the next election, and guess what, Jim? The election ain't gonna stop and people are still going to say, "How are you going to pay for all these promises?"

They want it both ways. They want to be able to say: "Yes, we're going to put money back in the health care system, just like the NDP, and we're going to spend money where it matters in our community to help rebuild the province, just like the NDP, but we don't really know how we're going to pay for it. Just trust us because our poll numbers are so high and we're going to win by default anyway, so don't worry about how we're going to pay for these things. Just look at the poll numbers and believe, believe, believe."

The fact of the matter is that's not going to cut it in the next election. My friend from Dovercourt is absolutely right. This next election is going to be about the track record of this government and the alternative. The alternative has to be credible. I hear the heckling from the government benches when we talk about these things, and I hear them talk about our fiscal track record. Yes, obviously we made a whole lot of mistakes or we wouldn't have gone from over there to over here. We learned that. We understand very clearly that unlike any other time in the history of our party, we are seriously in a position to be considered as an alternative party for government as much as either of the other two parties. Traditionally we've never been in that position.

I don't raise this next point as a matter of apology or excuses, except as reality. The last time we put together a platform going into the election, in 1990, the first time like that, we were not expecting to form a government. Nobody else was expecting us to form a government. Of course, as my colleague from Dovercourt has pointed out, neither was anyone expecting the severity and length of the recession and all of those things. However, that's in the past. What matters is that we've learned. We have learned from enough years, too many years, in opposition. But we learned a lot from the five years we governed this province. One of the things we learned, as difficult as it is for New Democrats to recognize this because a lot of our people and our supporters are from the community, they're activists, was that at the end of the day you have to know how you're going to pay for things.

That does not mean you buy in, obviously, to the whole right-wing global agenda that the Tories keep trotting out every time they go off and hurt someone, but it does mean, in my opinion, that the vast majority of voters, when they're looking at alternatives, expect them to be credible.

As social democrats we will, as we did this last weekend at our convention in Hamilton, take a look at alternatives that are, yes, fiscally responsible, but also look at reinvesting back into the very things that have made this such a great place to live.

It's easy for you to take pot shots at us when you're offering up these kinds of games, like Bill 15, which we're debating right now, to say: "There they go. They're raising taxes. Don't vote for them." Play into that the mindset that anything to do with government and public policy is evil and it's money wasted.

We recognize that and we wrestled with it. We really would love to have gone to the position the Liberals have. We really would like to have said that we'll do this and we'll do this and we'll do all these things and it will be different from what the Tories are doing and it will put us back to the traditional kind of caring community we've always been that makes this such a great place to live. We'll just sort of fudge around with the numbers, or we won't offer any real answer, or we'll just hike the figures when we look at GDP growth in the future and all those other things you can do. We'd love to have done that.

Mr Preston: Like mandatory opportunity.

Mr Christopherson: I don't like it when I get help from the Tories. It makes me so uncomfortable when you guys are so pleased with what I'm saying. But it is true: We both disagree with the Liberals so much, so I'll try to get used to it.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): Which Liberals?

Mr Christopherson: Why do I always feel that as soon as you start complimenting anything I'm saying, the trapdoor is going to open up underneath me and I'll never be seen again?

There really was an enticement to go to that because that's the perfect political position. The only small problem with it is that it's not legitimate. I'm not sure if I can say the word "honest" or not, Speaker — "No," she says — so I won't try it. But it's not legitimate. You can't say, "We're going to keep the tax cut" — by the way, the tax cut which requires \$4.6 billion to be borrowed by this bill just to pay for your tax cut. If we didn't have that tax cut, you wouldn't have to have the part of Bill 15 that says we need authorization to borrow \$4.6 billion. If you didn't have those sorts of things — but the Liberals want to keep that in place.

They won't say, "We're going to reverse some of that." We would have liked some of that world too, so what we have offered and will offer in the next election is an alternative, a very legitimate, very thoughtful, very doable, very governable, very manageable agenda that puts us back on the course to improving things in this province.

We probably wouldn't get nearly as outraged if there really were no other alternative. The government likes to portray that: "There was nothing else that could be done and that's why we had to do these awful, mean things. We don't really want to do them but we had to; there's no alternative."

There is an alternative. The government members know that from the alternative budget put forward by the OFL and a lot of social agencies and economists who view things a lot differently than they do — using their numbers, I might add. Everyone recognizes that in politics credibility, at the end of the day, is the only real currency that matters, so everything they used in their alternative budget, all the figures they used, were drawn from your government figures.

Mr Preston: They're accurate.

Mr Christopherson: One of the government backbenchers says, "They're accurate." I'm not disputing that point. If I were, I'd say so. I am saying that what I'm about to repeat from their alternative budget stems from figures that flow from your own government.

What did their alternative budget show? It showed that if the governing Tories had not cut income tax to their wealthy friends by 30%, and not cut one penny from health care, from education, from the environment, from labour protection, from social service programs, from virtually every part of the government, had not one penny been cut and you hadn't implemented the tax cut, the books would have been balanced, the deficit would have been balanced, the budget would have been balanced a year before you're going to do it — a year ahead of time.

Mr Preston: On the backs of the unemployed.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

1620

Mr Christopherson: The government members are heckling about jobs.

In politics you get lucky or don't get lucky with a lot of the economic environment you find yourselves in, particularly provincial governments. Even their own economists and their own right-wing newspapers make fun of them for trying to take credit for everything that's going on. The fact of the matter is we would have had a booming economy if you had done nothing, and if you hadn't implemented the tax cut and you had not cut program spending, we would have still had a balanced budget, and we would have had it a year ahead of time.

How do you think that makes seniors at home watching feel? How do you think that makes the thousands of people who work in the ministries for the people of Ontario who are now out of work because you eliminated their jobs feel? How do you think it makes my community of Hamilton-Wentworth feel when we're losing our psychiatric hospital, when we've lost St Peter's as a full hospital that we had before, when there's \$24 million less being spent on health care in Hamilton than before your commission came rolling into town?

How do you think it makes students feel, who are looking at unbelievable debt as they try to plan for their future and go to university, now that you've deregulated it and increased it beyond the ability of the average middle-class working family to send their kid to school? How do you think it makes people on fixed incomes in the inner city of Hamilton and every other community across this province feel, as they look at headlines in their local pa-

pers, like I see in the *Hamilton Spectator*, talking about property tax increases?

How do you think it makes all those people feel to hear that if you had not implemented your 30% tax cut, when the vast majority of people who are watching this and thinking about this were lucky to get a couple bucks and we're now hearing that if you hadn't implemented the tax cut, which Bill 15 is a part of implementing, you wouldn't have had to cut one penny from any program in government spending?

That's not to say that it still shouldn't happen. That's not to say that we can't improve the way we deliver services. That's not to say that you don't want to restructure certain things. But the viciousness, the meanness, the single-mindedness, the lack of compassion that has been involved in the slashing and cutting that they've done wouldn't have been necessary. People are going to be furious, and they'll show that fury in the next election in a way that the Tory backbenchers right now only have nightmares about, because they can't believe that anything could be that awful. But it will be.

I referenced the *Hamilton Spectator* earlier, and I want to mention now an editorial from just a couple of weeks ago, May 6. I've read this into the record before, but I think it says so much. By and large, the *Hamilton Spectator* is fairly comfortable with your agenda, so they're not exactly supporting us in any kind of partisan way. But what did they say on May 6?

A quick quote reads as follows: "A \$26-million downloading shortfall in Hamilton-Wentworth is helping to drive a 4.9% regional property tax increase this year. What difference will some of the tax reductions from Queen's Park make if they're taken away by higher municipal property taxes?"

The city right now haven't finished their budget process, but at committee of the whole they passed a motion that said they're going to have a zero increase on all those things that were not downloaded, that they have had traditional control over and that, quite frankly, our regional government, our local city council government, has done a pretty good job of managing.

The increase that's left over is almost \$52 a year per average household. That's your downloading only. So number one, you said to people: "You won't see any increase in taxes. We're the government that cut taxes." Yes, you cut them on the one hand provincially, but municipally they're going up. You're playing a shell game, hoping people wouldn't notice, hoping they would get angry at the alderman and regional councillors and not at you.

But that fact is, that increase is what you did to them and that's after you also said that any kind of exchange of services would be revenue-neutral. What a joke. At the region, as a result of the numbers I read to you from the *Hamilton Spectator* editorial, the 4.9%, we're looking at over \$100. Combined, we're talking over \$150 a year property tax increase because of your government.

If you're somebody who's earning a couple of hundred thousand, or \$300,000 or \$400,000, this probably doesn't

matter much, especially in light of the amount of money you're getting back in the tax cut. But for a lot of fixed-income people in my community, that's a lot of money. When that's added to all the other little things, if I can call them that, that have gone up as a result of your policies, those modest- and low-income people — look at how many real dollars they got in terms of the tax cut — are big-time losers under your policies, huge losers.

There's no win here for people on fixed income with those kind of numbers and those kind of tax increases, and yet you'll stand up, every one of you, anywhere you can, and say: "We're the wonderful government that cut taxes. Aren't we terrific?" And you didn't. You downloaded them down to municipalities and they've had to jack up their costs and it's showing itself in the property tax, which is a far more regressive system — in fact it's arguably the most regressive system. You've cut the money in the income tax system which yes, is progressive, but when you start to wind down the tax system, boy, the benefits to the higher incomes are incredible.

How incredible? An analysis done by Hugh Mackenzie points out — again, using the government's own numbers — and he says that in his article that I am going to quote:

"The government's own numbers show that more than half of the tax cut goes to the top 20% of taxpayers. The budget helpfully provides examples to understand the point. The four 'typical' families with incomes over \$120,000 a year average tax savings of more than \$4,600; the 12 'typical' families with incomes below \$60,000 a year...average tax savings of \$600."

Who is going to be impacted more by increased property taxes? The person who got \$4,600 from you, or the person who got \$600?

I have only got a couple of minutes so I'm going to shift gears because there's one other point I want to make that is so important. The government's touting this — and again the great fun they have with naming bills — as An Act to cut taxes for people and for small business. Of course, they're talking about all the tax cuts for small business.

You know, there are an awful lot of small businesses that are being hurt in terms of the revenue they get, because you've got to have revenue before you can tax it. Even you can't change that law of economics. The revenue has to be there. Do you know how many corner stores are barely getting by just because of your cut of 22% to the poorest of the poor when you slashed social assistance rates across the board by 22%?

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Do you know how many other small, community family businesses are being hurt by the fact that you're eliminating tens of thousands of decent-paying and in many cases white-collar jobs, or public sector jobs at the very least, jobs that at least pay a half-decent wage and have a set of half-decent benefits? Because you've eliminated them, those people aren't earning the same income. Guess what? They weren't spending the vast amount of their money buying stocks and bonds. Most of them were spending their money surviving. They bought food. They bought

clothes. They bought things for their home. They consumed things.

That's how the system works, remember? It's the one you're so proud of. Part of that equation is that the working people who populate the state and populate the society have to have the income to spend. If you hoard all the income at the top end, there's no money to circulate. You know who gets strangled first? Small business, because they can't withstand the kind of economic downturn that means. That's what you're doing, and that's what my colleague talked about earlier.

You are redistributing wealth, but you're taking it from the poorest of the poor. I defy you to go into any chamber of commerce meeting and say you're going to implement legislation that cuts the income of every person at that meeting by 22%. You wouldn't have the guts to do that, but you sure had lots of guts to go out and do it to the poorest of the poor. You had the guts to do that. The fact of the matter is that your policies help those who already have, and those who don't have are left behind. Those chickens will come home to roost in the next election.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments?

Mr Baird: I listened with great interest to the remarks by my colleagues the members for Dovercourt and Hamilton Centre.

In his speech, the member for Dovercourt said something very interesting. He talked about how last year we got an extra \$2 billion from the federal government. I checked the figures, and of course that was an extra \$2 billion in income tax because we brought in more money. We cut income tax. The member for Dovercourt is telling us how we brought in more money, and he's right. But we on this side of the House don't believe that extra money comes from the federal government; we believe the extra money in income tax collected by Revenue Canada comes from hardworking taxpayers in Ontario, people who work hard and who have remitted their money to income tax. Let's not leave any false sense in the belief that the federal Liberals are sending this government more money. In fact, the federal Liberals and Jean Chrétien, as the member for Dovercourt would agree, are cutting health and education at a rate that's simply unparalleled.

He also mentioned that we could have balanced the budget this year or even last year if we hadn't cut taxes. You know what? The member is potentially right. We could have balanced the budget earlier if we had been willing to say to the unemployed: "Stand in line. We've got a plan to balance the budget. We will balance the budget first and look at trying to create an economy that will create jobs second." Those of us on this side of the House reflected on that, and we disagreed. We thought it would be wrong to ask the unemployed and the underemployed in this province to wait for years while we balanced the budget. That's why job creation, economic growth and restoring hope and opportunity are the cornerstones in this government's agenda.

The member for Hamilton Centre mentioned in his remarks the taxes in Hamilton. He mentioned that in the

budget announced just this month, commercial-industrial education taxes in Hamilton are being brought down to the provincial average, which will mean a tax cut of tens of millions of dollars in the property taxes of businesses in Hamilton. That is something that no government was prepared to deal with. I know, like the cities of Toronto, Hamilton and Ottawa, that was a tremendous disincentive to doing business in the urban area, and this is meant to deal with that.

The Minister of Agriculture mentioned the NDP and small business. The NDP had a good small business policy: If you wanted to create a small business in the NDP's Ontario, you bought a big one and just waited.

Mr Michael Brown: I was very interested in the comments of the members for Dovercourt and Hamilton Centre. It seems to me that one of the flip sides we should talk about when we talk about so-called government good news in here is the tuition fees.

I admit quite readily to a lot of self-interest in that particular issue. I happen to have three daughters in universities across the province. My oldest daughter, Jennifer, is at Laurier, and she's experienced about a 60% to 70% increase in her tuition since she began her program four years ago. That's an undergraduate program. That's considerable cash.

I have another daughter who is at Queen's. She's studying chemical engineering, and she has just completed her second year. She is very concerned about the deregulation of tuition fees in that undergraduate program, quite possibly an increase of \$2,000 to \$2,500 for Amy.

Another daughter is at Laurentian. Her expenses this year will dramatically increase.

What I'm saying is that the tax cut is being paid for by my children. My children are paying for this tax cut. I'm a parent. There are lots of parents out there across the province, lots of grandparents, who believe they had the opportunity to go to university at reasonable tuition fees, they had accessibility, and they would like to see their children and grandchildren do the same. I ask the government to reconsider the way they tax our kids.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I'd like to comment on the remarks of my friends from Dovercourt and Hamilton Centre. I think it's important to recognize that they, in criticizing the government's approach to tax policy, put forward an alternative. That is significant. Obviously the government doesn't agree with that alternative, but they put forward an alternative.

We don't think it's intellectually honest to say we disagree with the government's approach without putting forward an alternative. So when we say we disagree with the decision to redistribute wealth upwards, from the poorest to the richest, we say we have an alternative. That alternative is to assist those people who make, individually, over \$80,000 a year to reinvest in health care and education in this province, rather than doing what the government is doing and borrowing the money, borrowing over \$20 billion over four years to increase the deficit in order to help transfer that wealth to people who don't need it. It doesn't make sense.

This is a government that claims it is opposed to debt. What it really means is that they're opposed to public debt. They say they're opposed to public debt and yet they're increasing it. They're borrowing \$20 billion.

On top of that, they're also creating an enormous amount of private debt for the very generation they claim they're assisting. They're saying to the younger generation, which they say they don't want to have to pay for the public debt: "No, no, no, we're not going to increase the public debt completely. We're going to transfer it to you by charging higher tuition fees that you can borrow from the bank."

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I also want to comment on my colleague from Hamilton Centre particularly. He talks about a situation where the government of Ontario is getting further into debt. Indeed it's an investment. It's not only an investment, but it's creating a climate —

Mr Wildman: When you do it, it's investment. When we do it, it's not.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Algoma.

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Hon Mr Villeneuve: We saw in the early 1990s — there is a thing in economics called the law of diminishing returns. The government put up taxes continuously from 1990 to 1995, and do you know what the end result was? Less money coming in. We saw an underground economy thriving like we'd never seen before. We saw small and medium-sized companies leaving the province of Ontario, sincerely wanting to stay, but the climate was such that they could not stay. They went to places like New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Manitoba, where some of those businesses are thriving.

Why is Ontario a magnet for newly created businesses? Ontario is a magnet because we now have a climate that is conducive to setting up new businesses, expanding businesses, and that's why we, the government of Ontario, through the ministry that I very proudly represent, rural job strategy, want young people to stay out in rural Ontario, where they were born and raised, because to have the brain drain go from the rural parts of Ontario to urban Ontario, never to return — we have equated school funding. They had good intentions. Both previous governments had good intentions. They were not going to punish the rural young people because our school boards were very poor boards. We now have equal funding, and that is very important.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton Centre, two minutes.

Mr Christopherson: I thank my colleagues from Nepean, Algoma-Manitoulin, Algoma, S-D-G and East Grenville. Let me start with the member for S-D-G and East Grenville. First of all, in terms of the underground economy, you ought to go talk to your Tory pals about the GST and what that did and take a look at the lines in terms of where they intersect when the underground economy started to boom. It was right about the time that the GST landed on everybody and that's when they started to feel

that they were overtaxed and they had an uncaring government.

The other thing with the same member is, the honourable minister talks about creating an environment for business, and then you know what happened? Surprise, surprise, big business stood up and said: "Yes, he's right. This is creating the kind of climate that we feel good about investing in." There's an old saying, "When you rob Peter to pay Paul, you can always count on Paul to support you." That's exactly what's going on here. I'm not surprised at all that there are no business people or investment dealers or councillors or anybody else out there saying, "No, no, don't do this." Why would they? It would be against their own self-interest. But go talk to the Peters of this province. Go talk to the people who are being hit by your cuts. So, excuse me, I have a lot of difficulty with your creating the right environment and listening to those who are applauding you for it.

The other thing is to the member for Nepean. I'm not going to get to everyone in the few seconds I have remaining. I would just remind him that whenever he likes every now and then, as his colleagues do, to talk about the Liberals' cuts to education and health, you've never made it a priority to fight those cuts because you know the hypocrisy that would be rained upon you if you did.

The Acting Speaker: I just want to warn the members to be a little careful in the choice of words. The English dictionary is full of good words. Use them. Further debate?

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): It's my pleasure to be able to rise in the House today to speak about Bill 15. For those watching who are confused about what we're actually discussing at this point, we are discussing and debating Bill 15, which is a bill following the budget speech made by the Finance Minister Eves on May 5.

Mr Wildman: It's the bill that allows you to borrow.

Mrs Elliott: You've had your chance.

This bill has two titles. The first title is the long title and it's called, "An Act to cut taxes for people and for small business and to implement other measures contained in the 1998 Budget."

Mr Wildman: Another measure to tax.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Algoma, please.

Mrs Elliott: But as is the fashion with all the bills, it also has a short title, and I think this says it all: "Tax Cuts for People and for Small Business Act."

We've been hearing a lot of philosophical discussion over the last hour or two about where our government is going and why it's going. In the budget presentation that Minister Eves gave, which essentially said where we are and where our economy is in this province and what our plans are for the next year — in my riding I can tell you that this budget was received very favourably. I would say that many of my constituents viewed this budget as one of reassurance, and clearly in the last three years we've been going through a period of restraint. There is no doubt that no matter what field you have been involved in, you've been dealing with adjustments. I would say to those who

are in education or in health or in municipal government who are probably feeling it the most, they are now going through what most of us in the private sector went through many years ago.

When I was thinking of running for politics, I was a shopkeeper of a small business. I was very much driven to enter politics by what I could see happening around me — in my view, terribly worried about where Ontario was heading and what the future looked like for our province from a small business perspective.

The opposition likes to paint Conservative members as though we are big business people and we eat dinner regularly with, as the member for St Catharines always refers to, Conrad Black. I haven't met the gentleman. My friends are small business people who mostly employ two, three, maybe five to six people, generally. We could see very much what was happening to this province and were desperately worried. That's why I decided to run for politics.

I looked at the spending habits of the Liberals before the NDP, and the NDP government in the past five years, and I saw a province that was once an example to jurisdictions around this world of how to govern well and how to be vibrant.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): It was the economic engine.

Mrs Elliott: It was the economic engine, a place for people to come to work hard and succeed. I could see that slipping away. It wasn't the province I felt we should have, we should be and we could be. I can say that in the former government of five years, where they doubled our debt from \$42 billion to \$90 billion, that has now left this government facing annual interest payments of \$9 billion a year and there's nothing else we can do with that money. It's gone to service a debt.

The electors in my riding decided that they wanted a government that would bring real change to this province. I listen to my colleague across the way. If you listen to him and forget what we're talking about, you might begin to think that everything was rosy in Ontario. I can remember a year before the election going to events and people tugging on my shoulder saying, "Brenda, if and when you are elected, we want you to do something" — as the Minister of Agriculture said — "because if you don't, and if your government doesn't act firmly, we'll have to leave the province."

I haven't heard that since we've been elected because a number of things have happened. First of all, this government was elected to create jobs. We said to the voters that we would try to set the stage in this province so that employers would come and hire 725,000 people. That's an enormous number of people. I am very proud to stand here in this Legislature and say we are halfway there, with over 350,000 people being employed in this province. Contrast that to a loss of 10,000 jobs in the five years of the former government and you can see what an enormous turnaround we've had in Ontario.

We were elected to turn this province around, to bring jobs, to bring success, to revitalize this province and we

decided that we would present to the voters two strategies. One was to cut taxes, and that's certainly what Bill 15 is about; the other one was to reduce spending. If I listened to my colleague and didn't understand what the state of the province was before, I would say, "Well, why are they cutting?" The fact was, when we entered government in June 1995, the former government was spending \$11 billion, not million — billion — a year more than we were taking in as revenue.

If I gave my children a credit card and said, "You can go out and spend however much you want; no one at the end of the day will be accountable but your mom and dad; you will have no personal accountability," they would probably act not a whole lot differently from this former government: unsustainable, unaccountable and absolutely irresponsible spending. Ontario did not deserve that and there is no doubt we were given the task. We chose, we asked for the task of turning this around and restoring the province.

In Minister Eves's budget, he had very good news for the people of Ontario. He said that we are actually ahead in our reduction targets. We planned to be at about \$5 billion and we in fact are there. We planned to have the deficit down to \$4.2 billion at the end of this year.

One of the members across the way said, "Why didn't you not cut taxes and why didn't you hurry along and balance the budget even sooner?" This government could have chosen to do that, but strategically it was not our choice that that was the wisest move for the province because there were two things wrong: a spending problem and a deficit problem. Methodically, slowly but surely, we are moving that deficit down from \$11 billion and our plan is in the year 2000-2001 to have a balanced budget for the province of Ontario for the first time in decades.

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I'm extremely confident we'll get there, and the budget certainly proved that. There are all sorts of people who agree with us, and not in our government. "This is a big budget for small business." "The government listened to small business job creation." "The budget is nothing but good news." All kinds of quotes all across that say, "We're on our way, we're doing well."

The second strategy for turning this province around was to cut taxes. A government can choose to cut sales tax, we chose to cut personal income tax, and we are actually going to be ahead. Minister Eves announced that we are going to be ahead and move that along faster than we anticipated.

The interesting thing is, while we're cutting personal income tax rates, revenue is actually up in the province. Why, do you ask, does that happen? Ontarians were paying about 58% of the federal income tax rate. It's now down to 40%. That's a significant difference. One of my colleagues mentioned that for a family earning about \$60,000, that means that each year they no longer pay an additional \$1,200. They keep that.

What do they do with it? They can buy services for their children. That could be music lessons. It could be appliances. It could go to car payments. The fact of the

matter is, we don't really care what the individual consumer does with that money. Our citizens are smart enough to know that they can invest it, they can spend it, they can do whatever they will with it, but what they are doing is sending two signals: that they are confident in the future of the province and that they're confident in their own financial wellbeing. They're also telling us that they are confident we are going to work hard to make sure this economy stays strong.

I come from the riding of Guelph, which is part of the Golden Triangle. One of the biggest problems business is facing in my riding is what is referred to as a brain drain or lack of skilled people. We have a lot of trouble getting people to come to certain kinds of highly skilled jobs, and even when we do get them, we are having problems because they tend to want to go south to the United States. Why do they go? Lots of reasons. One is climate. If you had the choice, I guess, between a southern California climate or a cold Ontario winter, there are those who would choose an Ontario climate. The other reason is of course salaries.

But another key reason that we have been alerted is the fact that our income tax rates are grossly different.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): They are too high.

Mrs Elliott: Yes, they are too high, and this is one way that we can attract people to stay in our communities to invest in Ontario and to help Ontario grow.

Interjection: We are putting the taxes down.

Mrs Elliott: We are putting the taxes down. The taxes are down by 30%. We are ahead of schedule and people will have money in their pockets to spend, to save, to invest in this province. This province is doing very well.

I heard my colleague across the way saying, "This is only a tax cut for the very rich." Their strategy is that they will in fact tax those who are higher-income earners. Well, 90% of people in Ontario will see an income tax rate cut of 30% or more. That is the vast majority of Ontarians. Those who earn between \$25,000 and \$65,000 are going to be the greatest beneficiaries of this particular program.

Mr Christopherson: Not individually. How the hell does that work?

Mrs Elliott: There's a line in your tax forms, if you take a close look, called the "Fair Share health care levy." That's an uncapped tax which will address those high-income earners, and I think they understand that it's their obligation to contribute to Ontario's tax revenues. They know that services will be delivered and they will be happy to do that.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Wait for your turn.

Mrs Elliott: Again I would remind my colleagues that we're talking about Bill 15. Bill 15 is the bill that came as a result of the Ontario budget. It has eight parts to it. The first part of course is the minister is seeking amendments to the Income Tax Act, so he can hurry along the income tax rate reduction.

The second part asks for amendments to the Corporations Tax Act. As I said earlier, I was a shopkeeper and most small business people that I know are very conscious of the taxes they have to pay. One of the amendments being sought to the Corporations Tax Act —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. There is only one debate going on in the House.

Mrs Elliott: One of the taxes that used to particularly bother me and I know bothers a number of people in small business was the employer health tax. This is a nasty, rather unfair tax that I believe was dreamed up by the Liberals years ago, and the NDP supported it. I'm very proud to say our government is not only ending it, but we're ending it ahead of schedule as indicated in this budget.

The employer health tax was a tax charged to employers every time they spent a dollar hiring someone. It was a proven job killer. Our intention is to end this tax. No employer will pay the employer health tax if they have a payroll of under \$400,000. This is of tremendous assistance to small business people across this province.

We are also going to cut in half the small business corporation tax which is presently in place. We will phase it down to half over the next eight years, and this will be done by way of legislation.

As I said, this bill has eight parts. There are a number of other sections. One is that amendments are being sought to the Highway Traffic Act. You say, "Why the Highway Traffic Act?" It comes as a result of an initiative that has to do with setting priorities for the government. We said our priority was to create jobs. We're doing that through tax cuts. We're doing that by setting confidence in the province and balancing the budget.

We also set priorities of health care, education and community safety.

In the field of health care, contrary to what you might be thinking, our expenditures in health care are not decreasing; in fact, they are increasing and are going from \$17.4 billion to \$18.5 billion, the greatest amount ever spent on health care in Ontario.

Education for elementary and secondary remains at over \$14 billion. I am very pleased that we've implemented the new pupil funding model. In my jurisdiction in Wellington county, we were one of the jurisdictions where elementary and secondary school children were funded at a much lesser amount than in some jurisdictions. I think it's very important that we're looking to find ways in which each child is fairly and equitably funded across this province. When I'm an employer, I don't ask where children were educated. I make an assumption that they are well educated, that they are Ontario educated and that a fair and equal amount was spent to make them wise citizens of the province.

The Highway Traffic Act is being amended so that fines may be increased from \$60 to \$150 for failure to obey a red or amber light. There has been a lot of discussion about people acting improperly, endangering lives of citizens, and this is a good opportunity to draw their at-

tention to the fact that this is inappropriate behaviour. Hopefully it will end the running of red lights.

My colleague the Minister of Agriculture referred to amendments that are being requested under the Land Transfer Tax Act. This is a request to allow the refund of land transfer taxes to individuals who purchase new homes. We've done this before. This is being extended. It was very successful. In my riding, particularly in the north part of the city, there are a number of new housing developments. There are a number of very excited couples who are starting their new families and are anxious to have a place, and this certainly encourages them to purchase a new home. There's no doubt about it that the construction industry is very happy with this because it is definitely an incentive for activity to occur in the construction industry, which is a tremendous job creator.

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There are also requests from the minister for amendments to the Ontario Loan Act. My colleagues across the way seemed to get all upset about this because it asks for the authorization of borrowing up to \$4.6 billion. I would say to my colleagues across the way —

Mr Wildman: To pay for a tax cut.

Mrs Elliott: While the income tax cut was being put in place, we actually saw an increase in revenue in the province.

But my constituents are just beginning to understand the cold, hard reality. Mind you, for the ordinary citizen, numbers are confusing. Millions and billions: Some think, "My gosh, huge numbers." But even as we are struggling to get the annual deficit from \$11 billion down to \$5 billion now and down eventually to a balanced budget, each year that debt is increasing, there's no doubt about it. It can't be done in a different way and naturally borrowing is required.

I'm pleased to see that there is an amendment being requested to the Ontario Lottery Corporation Act. For me, this is something my constituents are going to be happy about because it actually says that the provisions of the current act relating to video lottery terminals are repealed. There have been a number of people who have expressed concerns about video lottery terminals in particular as we were about to replace the roving casinos across this province with permanent facilities. It's our view that the permanent facilities will in fact be safer and will be a more controllable form of casino gambling. But there was a great deal of resistance in my riding to video lottery terminals. This government has listened carefully and this is being taken completely out of the Ontario Lottery Corporation Act.

One thing that needs to be emphasized that's being requested under the Retail Sales Tax Act is something that my colleague the Minister of Agriculture also referred to and is worth mentioning again. For the farmers in this province who are going to be purchasing farm building materials, the retail sales tax will be lifted on those.

That essentially touches on the key elements of Bill 15, which is the bill following the budget. As I said, the Ontario budget was extremely well received in my riding. It

was a very clear signal to the people of Ontario that this government has a plan, that we are following our plan closely, that our plan does mean fiscal responsibility. Our plan is leading to a balanced budget. It is leading to job creation, over 350,000 new private sector jobs having been created in the last three years. We are well on the way to making sure that this is a province where people are happy to live, to invest, to work. It's a province that I'm excited about. We're working so it will be strong and healthy and will not leave an unmanageable fiscal burden on our children.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Bradley: What a lot of people don't realize about this bill is that contained within it is the enabling legislation for the government to expand its gambling activities in the province. Yesterday we dealt at some length with the issue of the expansion and escalation of gambling opportunities across Ontario, and many of us were reflecting a concern out there among the general population that governments right across this country, and indeed beyond our borders, are expanding gambling opportunities far too rapidly and far too extensively and that this was tearing at the social fabric of the province.

This bill, and a lot of people don't realize this, contains within it provisions which deal with gambling activities, which enable the government to expand those gambling activities — we are going to see a drastic increase in slot machines in Ontario as a result of this legislation, and they'll be preying largely upon the most vulnerable people in our society, the most desperate people in our society, the people who are addicted to gambling — instead of trying to address this issue by saying: "Look, let's call a moratorium on it. Let's say enough is enough. Let's really conduct some detailed, careful studies of the implications of the expansion of gambling."

I know that many of the Conservative members ran on a family values platform last time. They were people who on a number of moral issues before this House are quick to rise and lecture others on what they should be doing on these moral issues. That's why I am very surprised that we don't have a number of people from the government benches expressing their concern about the impact on families, the impact on households in this province, the impact on the social fabric in Ontario. That's what this bill is about. Disguised in the background of this bill is a provision to expand gambling in Ontario. We should be proceeding with caution.

Mr Wildman: I listened carefully to my friend from Guelph, who talked about the reasons for the various measures in this bill. She pointed out the title of the bill, that it's a bill to cut taxes and to do "other measures." One of the other measures, which I think is in part V, allows the government to borrow. The member indicated that yes, it is important and needed that the government continue to borrow. But it's interesting that when you look at the amount this bill would allow the government to borrow under the Ontario Loan Act, it is almost exactly the same amount as the revenue the government is losing due to the tax cuts. That would mean to me that the gov-

ernment is borrowing the money from private financial institutions in order to cut taxes for people, many of whom run those institutions. It seems to be a bit of a circle when you think about it.

Really, the government, instead of doing what it said it was going to do when it came to government, that is, cut the deficit in a certain number of years, is indeed continuing to borrow, when you look at the cumulative borrowing over four years, a total of \$20 billion to give a 30% tax cut. That's interesting. I find it really hard to understand that this government says it's against debt, when one considers that in the time this government has been in power the debt of this particular jurisdiction has increased by \$16 billion. This is a government that said it was going to lower the debt.

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 37(a) —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Member for Lake Nipigon, are you interested to see what's happening tonight?

Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Windsor-Sandwich has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Environment concerning air quality in Ontario. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

Questions and comments?

Mr Baird: I want to congratulate my colleague the member for Guelph on some excellent remarks with respect to Bill 15, with respect to the budgetary policies of the government of Ontario. She brings a unique perspective, as do a good number of the representatives of the government caucus, of the interests of small business. She spoke with great eloquence of her experiences running a small business and the impediments of excessive government regulation and excessive taxation to the running of that business. That is exceptionally important.

One of the other members did mention parts of this bill that would deal with gaming and gambling in Ontario. I checked, and the very first mention of that in the bill is in section 38, which talks about the distribution of proceeds of lotteries "to or for the benefit of charitable organizations and non-profit corporations, or for the support of other activities...for the benefit the people of Ontario," ensuring that the technical amendments to the Ontario Lottery Corporation Act allow money to flow to charities and non-profit organizations. That's the very first part of this bill that deals with that, so I think it's important to put that on the record.

The member did speak about the economy in Ontario and the importance of reducing income taxes to middle-class and hardworking taxpayers. She is very correct. We saw that when the previous government raised taxes they brought in less revenue, because people simply didn't have the disposable income to spend and therefore they weren't spending in the retail establishments and other small businesses within their communities. That, regrettably, was extremely true.

I know the member for Guelph cares about job creation. I suppose we could have said to the unemployed, "Step aside. You'll wait three or four years while we balance the budget," but she, like most members of the government, said it was important to tackle job creation and deal with the problems of poverty and unemployment in Ontario, and to grow the economy to ensure that more people could work. I know she shares my enthusiasm for the solid progress the government has made and will want to continue working hard in this regard.

1710

Mr Michael Brown: I was interested in the comments of the member for Guelph. One of the things I find interesting — this is a tax bill, a borrowing bill, a revenue bill — and one of the things that has concerned many of us is the government setting the education tax across the province by regulation, behind closed doors, so that on that particular revenue the Legislature does not even have the opportunity to debate it. That property tax is set behind closed doors at the cabinet room down there. That's where it comes from.

I was reading a very good article the other day in *Saturday Night*, which spoke about fees and taxes that Parliament didn't approve. Some would know that there is a court case going on in this province now with regard to probate fees, fees on wills.

Mr Bradley: A user fee.

Mr Michael Brown: It's supposed to be a user fee, and it's the same process whether the estate is \$10 million or \$100. It costs the government the same amount to certify it. However, the NDP government of the day increased that fee to a percentage, and the argument before the court is: "You can't do that because that's a tax. It's not a fee, because a fee would be the same for the certification of the will regardless of the amount." So it's not a fee, it's a tax.

I would think that the government here, these people in front of us who want accountability on tax issues, would be getting rid of that or at least coming to the Legislature and asking the Legislature to approve that tax rather than have it done the way —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Member for Guelph, you have two minutes.

Mrs Elliott: I would like to thank very much my colleagues from St Catharines, Algoma, Nepean and Algoma-Manitoulin for their comments. This is an interesting debate because we are clearly at serious philosophical variances on how economies work, on how taxes should be raised, what programs should be funded through the generation of those taxes and so forth.

What I say from a Guelph perspective is that health care funding is a very high priority for constituents in my riding. They are very, very happy to see our funding of health care not only maintained but in fact increased, and they are seeing tangible benefits of those investments already in my riding. They are very happy to see movements like 50% of the education costs coming off the property tax and now being paid for through the provincial revenues. That's a very good move as far as constituents

in my riding are concerned. They're thrilled to see us halfway in reaching our target of 725,000 jobs. That's a very important thing for people, whether you have young people in your family ready to look for a job or whether you're an older person looking for a change in your workplace. Opportunities are very important and I think the province needs to provide them.

I believe our moves in balancing our budget and reducing personal income tax are the right moves in setting this province as a beacon for people to come to invest, to hire people, which in turn will create jobs. I think we have initiated a number of issues that address concerns about fairness across this province. I think the short title of Bill 15 says it all. This government, through this bill, is looking to encourage tax cuts for people and for small business. It's a good thing.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to join the debate on the budget bill. I'll start by saying that like the member for Guelph, my background is business as well. I was chairman of three companies. We had 300 or so employees, so I too have a bit of firsthand experience with business.

Starting on the tax cut, firstly, there is no doubt that the personal income tax cut has cost the province of Ontario a substantial amount of revenue, a huge amount of revenue, and no one can deny that. As a matter of fact, I will quote Standard and Poor's. Standard and Poor's is a credit rating agency. There are four major credit rating agencies and this is one of them. Two have pronounced already on Ontario's debt performance. What Standard and Poor's said, and this is a release from last week, May 19, about the move to cut taxes before the fiscal house was in order — that's what it was. Mike Harris decided he was going to give a tax break and it is a tax break to the best-off in this province, make no mistake about it.

This is the government's own chart on the tax cut. What it shows, as you can see down here, is that people making more than a quarter of a million dollars a year, \$250,000 a year, are going to get a tax break worth \$500 million. That is what Mike Harris has decided, that he's going to cut personal income taxes by \$500 million for people making more than a quarter of a million dollars, an enormous amount of money. What has that meant, cutting those taxes before we have a balanced budget?

I'll use another figure. The investment dealers of Canada put out quite a good chart on deficits around the country. In this chart, and the viewers will not be able to see these numbers, in 1994-95 the combined deficit of all 10 provinces and the federal government was \$53 billion. In other words, governments of all provinces and the federal government were spending, four years ago, \$53 billion more than they were bringing in. That's unsustainable. I think everyone in the Legislature knows that.

Now it is four years later and what is the combined deficit of the 10 provinces and the federal government? It's \$5.3 billion. What does that mean? What it means is that the total of all of the other nine provinces and the federal government have balanced their budgets in four

years. The other nine provinces and the federal government have balanced their budgets. Ontario, solely now, accounts for the total deficit of all governments in Canada.

I say to the member for Guelph and others, if this were a business and you were "losing money," you were running huge deficits, would you declare a fiscal dividend? That's what Mike Harris decided to do. We find that last year we still had a deficit of \$5.2 billion. Mike Harris has taken the debt of Ontario from \$88 billion so that this year it will be \$110 billion; he has added \$22 billion to the debt. A huge part of that is a result of lost revenue because of the income tax cut. I repeat myself: \$500 million of it, according to the government's own numbers, going to people making more than a quarter of a million dollars a year.

What does all of that mean? Firstly, it means the debt of the province of Ontario, as I said, has gone from \$88 billion when Mike Harris took over to \$110 billion. Look at the budget this year. The debt of the province is \$110 billion. For every single penny of the tax cut, we have had to go out and borrow that money. The taxpayers of Ontario already will have paid \$700 million in interest to pay for that tax cut.

Standard and Poor's has said to Ontario: "We are not going to upgrade your credit rating. We are going to give you the same credit rating exactly as we gave Bob Rae." Mike Harris has been in power now for three years, he's had his chance to get the fiscal house in order, and what do the credit ratings agencies say? These people are paid money to be objective about the credit worthiness of governments and companies. They say:

"However, by focusing simultaneously on tax reduction, the pace of deficit reduction in Ontario has lagged other provinces, leading to a rising provincial debt burden since the balanced budget plan was first introduced. Tax-supported debt is projected to rise to approximately 35% at the end of fiscal 1998-99, up from 29% in fiscal 1995." 1720

In other words, when Mike Harris came in the debt to GDP, which is a key measurement, was 29%, and now at the end of this fiscal year it will be 35%. That's why they said that all they did was to reaffirm Ontario's AA- rating. Remember, Ontario at one time had a AAA rating. It was downgraded to AA+ and AA- and none of the credit rating agencies have moved Mike Harris up an inch. Why? It's because Mike Harris decided to cut taxes, add debt and put our credit rating at risk. That's when it's an expensive decision.

Mr Bradley: Before the balanced budget.

Mr Phillips: Before the balanced budget, every penny borrowed. Somebody will say, "Yes, but it stimulated the economy so it was a good investment." I'd say two things to that: One, when we are asking hospitals to cut 15% of their budgets — every single member here has had a tragedy in a local hospital, not because the hospital wasn't doing its best; it was because the resources weren't there.

Our students are faced with incredible tuition fee increases. You talk about hitting them twice. Mike Harris has taken the provincial debt up to \$110 billion. They're

going to have to pay it off, and who's benefiting from it? I'll guarantee you, there aren't any students making a quarter of a million dollars. They're not the ones who are getting that big tax break. We give the best-off in this province the dividend and then we say to the students, "You pay for it," by taking on personal debt of enormous proportions, and they're paying for it.

Our elementary and secondary schools: I guarantee you, every one of us will have a problem with local accommodation for our schools. Why? Because Mike Harris says we have this terrible deficit problem we have to tackle.

I say, "All right, if it's that crucial," and it was important to tackle it, "tell me again how we can afford to spend \$5 billion a year on a tax cut before we've even come close to balancing the budget?" Not only are we having to borrow that money, we are now paying substantial interest on that money, and paying twice for it in many respects.

What was the benefit? A lot of people have suffered. One of the most interesting pages of the budget to me is the explanation on what has been driving the Ontario economy. I think it's important for all of us to understand this, because if we don't understand it and things start to turn a little sour in the future, it will be our own fault for not understanding it. What has been driving the Ontario economy?

Mr Bradley: Low interest rates.

Mr Phillips: My colleague here says, "Low interest rates." As a matter of fact, that's one of the key pages: continued low interest rates, a low dollar and low inflation. What has it meant? The interesting chart to me in the budget was the one that showed the percentage of our gross domestic product represented by exports. What it shows that is our booming economy has to date been heavily driven by our growth in exports. Actually this chart would show that in 1989 — it says 28.5% — a little less than 29% of Ontario's economy was exports. In 1997 it's 46%. The people at home probably can't see that number, but less than 29% up to 46%.

Mr Bradley: You have to thank Bill Clinton.

Mr Phillips: My colleague says to thank Bill Clinton, but let's be honest with ourselves: There is no doubt that what has driven the growth in Ontario's economy has been the exports, 90% of them to the US and half of them auto. So I say to all of us, as I hope we all understand but in case we don't let me just say it again: I am very pleased with our businesses that have been able to exploit the opportunities in the US, but the growth in Ontario's economy has had, frankly, dare I say it, little to do with the tax cut and heavily to do with our growth in exports to the US, heavily auto and, as the budget points out, heavily the high-tech area.

What does that say to us? It says several things. One is, let's be honest with ourselves about the impact the tax cut has had on our booming economy. It has been heavily because of exports. Second, let's recognize that no other economy perhaps in the industrial world relies as much on exports now as the Ontario economy. We always think of Japan as being an export-oriented country.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I thought you were against free trade, Gerry. "If the Americans get a cold, we're going to get the flu."

Mr Phillips: That's right. The Minister of Agriculture is here now and he starts to bark a little bit. I would just say to him, I say to the farm community of Ontario, you'd never go out when you were losing money and borrow money to spend money you didn't have. You wouldn't go and borrow money to spend money. My bank would never let me.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: You've never been a farmer, Gerry, quite obviously.

Mr Phillips: My background is rural.

All the people I know who have to run businesses would say it is crazy to go and borrow. We've borrowed \$10 billion for the tax cut. We've paid \$700 million interest on it. It makes no economic sense. You can say, "Well, it drove the economy," but according to the budget itself, what has driven the Ontario economy is exports. Certainly, when I meet with the farm community they tell me they are doing very well on exports. They are able to compete on exports. They do exceptionally well, as do all our business people in Ontario.

Mr Gerretsen: I think Lyle Vanclief had a lot to do with that.

Mr Phillips: I care less about who had something to do with it and more about the results, and the results have been very good. If we think it was the income tax cut that's driving the Ontario economy, we mislead ourselves.

On the first big part of the budget bill, the tax cut, I would say to Ontario, first look at the objective organizations that evaluate the credit-worthiness of Ontario. Look at what the credit rating agencies are telling you. They have not moved the credit rating of Ontario an inch.

I remember Mike Harris going after Bob Rae. Of course he sat there and Bob Rae sat there. He berated Bob Rae for the credit rating of Standard and Poor's, and yet Mike Harris hasn't moved it an inch.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Give it a little time.

Mr Phillips: "Give it a little time," the member says. The Minister of Agriculture sits in the cabinet and I assume understands what's happening over at Hydro. I raise the Hydro one because Hydro pays the taxpayers of Ontario about \$200 million a year to guarantee its debt. That's the fee they pay Ontario. There's a price to be paid for that. It's nice to get the revenue, but when the going gets tough it's the Ontario taxpayers on the hook.

What we see in the annual report of Hydro, which just came out in the last few weeks, is very troubling to me. The way I read the financial statement, the board of directors have used a little-known power to write off a bunch of expenses that should have been written off this year, next year and the following year. They moved it back.

Mr Bradley: Why did they do that?

Mr Phillips: I know why they did it. It was so that they could then legally freeze rates. It says here, "the related amounts which would have been charged to future opera-

tions under generally accepted accounting principles for enterprises operating in a non-regulated environment."

The reason I get off on a mild tangent there is just to say that there are two reasons why the credit rating agencies have real concerns about Ontario's credit-worthiness. One is the tax cut. Cutting taxes is like a company declaring huge dividends and still running large losses. No bank would ever give you a penny if you did that, but of course Mike Harris can do what he wants. Second, we're doing it at a time when Hydro has huge problems. Guess who is on the hook for it? Guess who signed the bank note? Guess who has guaranteed —

Mr Bradley: Ernie Eves.

Mr Phillips: Ernie Eves, but on behalf of guess who? The taxpayers who are home watching right now. So there we are: the bill cutting taxes, forcing us to go out and borrow more money to pay for it, and paying substantial interest on it.

1730

I wanted to talk about the second part of the bill, and that's the gambling stuff in here. We had expected, and I hope we haven't been misled, that the minister responsible for gambling was going to bring forward a legislative accountability framework to allow us to have a very substantive debate around slot machines and casinos, broad-scale casinos. The government is charging ahead to introduce, if I'm not mistaken, 44 new casinos around the province and 15,000 slot machines. By their own estimate, the people of Ontario are going to lose \$1 billion a year. You pull those slot machines, and Ontario taxpayers are going to leave \$1 billion in there. That's the government's own estimate.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): Better to spend it here instead of Atlantic City.

Mr Phillips: There's the member for Etobicoke-Humber saying, "We'll have them spend it here instead of Atlantic City." It isn't the people who go to Atlantic City who will be losing it; it will be your friends and neighbours — \$1 billion.

What Mike Harris said was: "Listen, we need the tax cut to put \$1 billion into people's pockets. That will really stimulate the economy." If he believes that, then he has to believe that taking \$1 billion out of people's pockets is going to have a depressing effect on the economy. That's what this is. This bill is a backdoor way of giving the approval for 15,000 slot machines, and people will lose \$1 billion in them, according to the government's own estimate. All of us had better have a big debate about the impact of people, friends and neighbours, losing \$1 billion a year just on slot machines, let alone the charity gaming casinos.

Furthermore, when we raised this in the Legislature, the answer we got was that every penny will go incrementally to health. Well, that's not what the bill says; that's not what the legislation says. Somebody is incorrect here, because the bill doesn't say the money is going to health. It says, "for any of the following purposes:" — any of them.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Let's go back to roving casinos, with no controls.

Mr Phillips: The Minister of Agriculture is saying there's nothing wrong with \$1 billion being lost in slot machines.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Coming out of the bookmaker's handling.

Mr Phillips: Now Judge Guzzo is into it.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Ottawa-Rideau, that's the last time I warn you. Take your seat.

Mr Phillips: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Guzzo is out of control again, I'm afraid.

What we were told by the Minister of Finance was that every single penny of this will go incrementally to health. The legislation they've introduced doesn't say anything of the kind. It says it can be used "for any of the following purposes:

"The promotion and development of physical fitness, sports, recreational and cultural activities... The activities of the Ontario Trillium Foundation... The protection of the environment... The activities and objectives of charitable organizations and non-profit corporations... The funding of community activities and programs."

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Gerry, are you against that?

Mr Phillips: The Minister of Agriculture asks if I'm against that. I want to get a straight answer from the government, because Ernie Eves told us here — in fact, he used the word "commitment": "That's a commitment." This bill is nothing of the sort. So I want to know the answer to that. I want to know what is the fact. I think we're going to want to have a very significant debate around the impact of the people of Ontario losing \$1 billion a year, by the government's own estimates, in slot machines. For any of you who have dealt with a problem gambler, this is serious stuff we're involved in here. I know that the government is perhaps blind to the problem because it sees revenue pouring in — an election next year, revenue pouring in — and they'll say, "We've got our budget all balanced," but on whose backs will it have been balanced?

Mr Bradley: I agree with Derwyn Shea on this.

Mr Phillips: On the gambling part of this bill, and this is going to committee, I gather, we look forward to a healthy debate on the government's plans for 15,000 slot machines.

Mr Bradley: Paul Christie will be in, and Howard Moscoe.

The Acting Speaker: Member for St Catharines.

Mr Phillips: I'm interested in the fine line the government tries to define between video lottery terminals and slot machines. They're very much one and the same thing.

The third part of the bill I wanted to talk about has to do with the part of the bill that is not here but should be here, and that is the fact that now the fourth-largest source of revenue for the province of Ontario is property taxes. Mike Harris sets property taxes now worth over \$6 billion. It is a whole new experience for Ontario, having the provincial government setting property taxes worth over \$6 billion.

I say to the business people of Ontario, it's now Mike Harris who sets half your property taxes. I'm sure most business people think: "It's my local council. I'm going to have to go down and see my local council and get at them about property taxes." Well, over half of it, it isn't your council that's dealing with it; it's Mike Harris, right here.

I say to the business people, you will have no opportunity to have any influence in the debate about the rates that are set because they're all set by something, to use our jargon, called regulation. What regulation means for the public is, on a Saturday you find out through something called the Gazette that Mike Harris just set the property taxes, because it's done down the hall, in the cabinet room, in private. Nobody knows about it until it's published in the Gazette. I think that's wrong. I think we should, like every single democratic government that I know, debate those tax rates.

Here we are today dealing with the land transfer tax. We are debating whether to increase the minimum fine from \$60 to \$150 for failing to obey a red or amber light, and so it should be. We should have that debate, but surely we should be having a debate about over \$6 billion of taxes set by the province by regulation. Furthermore, in my opinion, it should be showing up as revenue on the government's books. But, no, we are going to debate the other issues in the bill, but we will not have any opportunity to debate that part of the bill.

I wanted to touch on a couple of other matters that were raised before I share my time with my colleague from Kingston and The Islands. Another matter that was raised by the member for Guelph — actually, two other matters: One is, she talked about the employer health tax. This is a small point, but I found it interesting. She said the employer health tax was a job killer, and actually she said they were eliminating the employer health tax. I think Hansard will show that.

The fact of the matter is I see that Mike Harris has decided he's going to actually take in more money in the employer health tax than the NDP did. I see that Mike Harris actually is taking in more money. The last year the NDP revenue was roughly \$2.7 billion, and I see now that Mike Harris is taking in \$2.8 billion in employer health tax. I found that mildly interesting. Rather than, as the member for Guelph said, getting rid of it, they actually are taking more revenue in the employer health tax.

1740

Finally, I wanted to talk a little bit about downloading. I asked earlier: Who's paying for this tax cut? Who are the people who have to pay so Mike Harris can give the tax break? You remember I said earlier that people making more than \$250,000 get a \$500-million tax break. Guess what? You know who paid for that \$500 million? The property taxpayers.

Mike Harris cut support to municipalities by about \$600 million. They've dumped about \$600 million of new costs on to property taxes. Then they said, "Municipalities, you go and cut the services."

Municipalities have been working for years to cut costs. Many of us in this room have been in municipal

politics and we know that is the level that is extremely sensitive to expenses. But Mike Harris said: "No, cut \$500 million or \$600 million out. You can do that." It has not been that easy. We're now seeing two things.

What are we seeing? First, we're seeing substantial new user fees. Many in the communities across Ontario thought that with the tax break they would be better off. They didn't realize that they get perhaps a small break on the income tax, which is being eaten up in things like tuition fees, but also, importantly, in brand-new user fees from municipalities. The second thing we're finding is that some municipalities just can't cut any more, so unfortunately, property taxes are going up in many communities across the province, and we're being warned by our municipal leaders that there's more to come.

By the way, I would just add that they're faced with that and they're faced with a huge problem with the property taxes. I'm looking forward to a lengthy debate on Bill 16. For the people of Ontario, the property tax reform is a mess. A year ago, Mike Harris brought in something called Bill 106, which was to reform property taxes. Then they brought in Bill 149 to try and fix Bill 106. Then they brought in Bill 164 to try and fix Bill 149. Now we've got Bill 16, and we've heard from municipal clerks and treasurers from around the province — and these are the senior civil servants, the key people.

Mr Bradley: Non-partisan.

Mr Phillips: That's right: non-partisan, the key professionals who are trying to run the municipalities efficiently.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: The Minister of Municipal Affairs is bitter over there about this.

What the clerks and treasurers have said is, "So complex is the application of Bill 106, Bill 149 and Bill 16 that few municipalities in Ontario will be able to fully bill taxes before the year is ended with any degree of success within the parameters of the law."

The reason I raise that is that Mike Harris has decided to download brand-new costs on to municipalities. On top of that, their only real source of significant revenue comes from property taxes, and the government has so screwed that up that our clerks and treasurers are wondering whether there's any hope of saving it. They go on to say, "A win situation is to let Bill 16 die on the order paper," they think it's so screwed up. I'm afraid the government may not even allow us to take it to committee to see if we can't do some patching up on the thing.

Mr Wildman: Surely they won't do that.

Mr Phillips: There's a threat of that.

To conclude my remarks, the debate on taxes is always interesting. Who out there doesn't like a tax cut? I just say, you all run your own homes, your own personal finances. You would never spend money you don't have. You know better than that.

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: Well, there they are barracking over there, but the public should know they've had to borrow \$10 billion to pay for the tax cut. I knew that would strike a responsive chord with them.

I would also say that the property tax issue, which is part of the downloading in the budget, is a mess, a total mess.

And the gambling — you think you can slide this gambling stuff through the back door. A billion dollars of lost money every year in slot machines and you're trying to deal with it —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Just wait for your time for questions and comments and I'll be pleased to give it to you.

Mr Phillips: I'm going to conclude my remarks and turn it over to my colleague from Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: I would like to start at the last point my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt made — he always makes these points in such an excellent fashion — and that is the fact that \$500 million is being given back, through your various tax cuts, to people making \$250,000 a year or more. That happens to be the same amount that is being downloaded on the property taxpayer.

We've had quite a debate about Bill 16, for one day — I believe it was yesterday. Today at 5 o'clock — Mr Speaker, you'll be interested in knowing this — we were served with a closure notice. That closure notice says that the next time Bill 16 is called during second reading, it will be put to a vote immediately. I'll just read it to you: "When Bill 16 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill."

But it goes further than that. It goes on to say: "The bill shall be ordered for third reading. The order for third reading of the bill shall then immediately be called and the remainder of the sessional day shall be allocated to the third reading stage of the bill." In other words, the people of Ontario should know that the next time Bill 16 gets called, it is being called for second reading and third reading.

The members of the government are shaking their heads that that's a good thing. Well, what do you do with this letter that we received yesterday from the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario? They're the professionals in this province who are —

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): We have a meeting scheduled.

Mr Gerretsen: He's saying a meeting has been scheduled. When? After third reading? After the bill has been given three readings, the only way you're going to amend it is by bringing in another bill, which would be the fifth bill on the same issue.

I don't want to repeat everything I said about what the municipal clerks and treasurers put in their letter. I already questioned the Minister of Municipal Affairs about that today, and he didn't have any answers to any of the questions raised by the municipal clerks and treasurers. As a matter of fact, he is upset now, because not only did he get a copy of the letter — Mr Eves got the original letter — but he's apparently upset that some members of the opposition got copies of the letter as well. I will tell you, if you

don't want to talk to the municipal clerks and treasurers, they want to talk to somebody around here who maybe can influence this legislation to some extent.

I will read to you once again the two or three most relevant sections in this letter. The people of Ontario should understand that these are the people who on a day-to-day basis manage our municipalities, large and small, and deal with the property taxpayers on an ongoing basis.

What do they say about this bill? They say: "This bill is complicated, cumbersome, confusing and...badly drafted. It serves to perpetuate the bad system that the government was so bent on eliminating. The end product is a political and administrative nightmare."

What do they say in the very last section of the letter? They say: "This bill, if passed as drafted, will embroil municipal councils in complex, confusing and inefficient systems of taxation. Administrative costs will increase...."

"Municipal revenue streams will be drastically deferred. For many municipalities, tax bills will not likely be mailed until September or even October."

I find it very ironic that the day after the municipal clerks and treasurers put all their concerns in a letter to both the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and to some members of the opposition, basically saying, "Don't pass this bill, there have to be some amendments made to it," is the day the government comes in with a closure motion to basically say: "We don't care. We're barrelling right ahead. We're calling it for second reading the next time we call it, and third reading is going to take place immediately thereafter."

1750

The professionals in this province who deal with this on a day-to-day basis have told all of us, the government, the opposition members and the bureaucracy here at Queen's Park: "This bill won't work. You're making a mess, even worse than the mess we have right now. Please talk to us. Please take it off the order paper. Let it die. Let's get together and let's draft a bill that everyone can not only live with, but that can make sense to the municipalities." This government is basically saying: "We don't care. We're going to invoke closure and there we go."

I say that's the wrong thing to do. You will find out that it's the wrong thing to do, as the property taxpayers of this province are going to revolt on this issue.

Let's go back again to Bill 15. Thank you very much for your indulgence, Mr Speaker, but I believe the people of Ontario have a right to know what this government is really all about.

As I've said in this House many times before, but I think it bears repeating again, I find it absolutely incomprehensible that a government that likes to fashion itself as a government that's interested in running this province in a businesslike fashion would allow the public debt of this province to increase — this is according to their own figures contained in the budget document and is now reflected in Bill 15 — from \$89 billion per year to \$115 billion in just slightly over three years.

I would have had some respect for you if you had said, "Yes, we want to do this as quickly as possible" —

Mr Baird: Oh, give it up. You promised to cut taxes.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean, please, and the member for Oxford.

Mr Gerretsen: I guess they don't want to have respect. I said I would have had some respect for you if you'd at least had the intellectual honesty to say: "All right, the public debt of this province is a real problem. We are going to defer any tax cuts until such time as —"

Mr Baird: That's it, John. You promised to cut taxes.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nepean, I've warned you at least five times to keep quiet. Let me make sure that I don't have to say it again.

Hon Mr Jackson: It's his birthday.

The Acting Speaker: It's his birthday. I see. Happy birthday, but keep quiet.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. The other thing of course that just confirms it even more is that if you look at the expenditure side of the budget document, which is on page 54, the interest on the public debt in this province in the last three years has gone up from \$7.8 billion to \$9.2 billion per year.

Mr Wildman: That's at a time of low interest rates.

Mr Gerretsen: That's at a time of low interest rates. Can you imagine if interest rates were still hovering around 10% or 12%? With all the carping you've done about the social programs in this province, it's very interesting to note that we spend more on serving the public debt in this province than we do on social service programs that the government of Ontario delivers, because the public debt interest is \$9.2 billion and the community and social services dollars that are being spent are \$7.8 billion. It's kind of interesting that you are allowing that public debt to increase, and therefore you're allowing the interest on the public debt to increase on an ongoing yearly basis as well.

The other tables that are very interesting — this is in the government's own document, your own budget document — deal with who actually gets these tax cuts we've been talking about. Let's just take a few examples. A single senior with a net income of \$14,900 gets a \$230 tax cut over four years. It's very interesting how in this document they always talk about it in terms of over four years. If you take \$230 over four years, that is less than \$60 per year. That is the same individual who, if nothing else, spent at least that much money to be involved with the senior citizens' drug plan in the province.

Let's go on to a one-earner couple who makes \$29,000 per year. How much of a tax saving do they get? The book says \$1,620. However, that's over four years, so that's only \$400 per year.

We'll just take it up the ladder a little bit. Let's talk about somebody who makes \$186,000 —

Hon Mr Villeneuve: No, no, that's a big jump.

Mr Gerretsen: Okay, they're saying it's a big jump. All right, I'll go to another one. Let's talk about a senior

couple that makes \$47,000 per year. What do they get? They get a saving of \$600 per year.

Mr Jordan: Each.

Mr Gerretsen: No, this is for the couple. Read your own document.

Now let's go to that individual who makes \$181,000 per year. That individual makes \$18,000 a year. What's very interesting is that for all the other examples they've said the person gets X number of dollars over four years, but in this particular case they're saying it's \$18,000 per year for an individual who makes \$181,000. If they had put it into four-year terms, it would be \$72,000.

It just goes to show you that the member for Scarborough-Agincourt is 100% correct when he says that people who make \$250,000 or more in effect are getting back \$500 million of the tax cut, which happens to be the same amount that you have downloaded on the local municipalities. It is totally and absolutely inexcusable.

There's another very interesting part in the budget document. That deals with the revenue side of things. We heard comments earlier here today, and in particular the third party seems to be aroused, about, "How is the Liberal Party going to pay for its campaign," when we form the next government. I'll tell you how, which will be a darned good start. Take a look again on the revenue side of things. Look what's happened to the retail sales tax in this province. The amount of money that the government takes in, in additional money, over the last four years in retail sales tax has increased from \$9.4 billion to \$11.4 billion. There's \$2 billion of additional revenue right there.

How about corporations tax? What's happened there? It's gone up from \$5.1 billion to \$7.6 billion. So there in two programs alone you've got an extra \$4.5 billion more of annual revenue that you're getting now than you did when you started. It's kind of interesting, because that also happens to equate to about the amount of your tax cut. What I am simply saying is that there is enough room there to pay for the additional programs that we're talking about.

The other interesting thing, and reference has already been made to it, deals with the income from government enterprises, particularly the Ontario Lottery Corp. I think the people of Ontario ought to know once again that what this government is in effect banking on, with the proliferation of gambling in this province, is the fact that you intend to take out of the taxpayers' pockets the sum of \$1 billion.

They seem to be of the opinion that if you put these casinos in, people are going to come from all over the place and it's going to be a real revenue-producing thing. That only works if you have maybe, I don't know, four or five casinos around the province. But once you start putting them in each and every community — which in effect you're doing by introducing about 43 of them — I don't see any reason why people would come in from the outside. They would just be going from one community that has a charitable casino to another community with a charitable casino.

I see that my time is almost up, but I just want to remind the people —

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: For today. I will be back.

I'd just like to remind the people of Ontario once again that this government has today introduced closure on a bill that is extremely important to the property taxpayers in Ontario, whether you're a residential property taxpayer or an industrial or commercial property taxpayer. They don't even want to discuss Bill 16 beyond the current discussion.

1800

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. The member for Windsor-Sandwich has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of the Environment concerning air quality in Ontario.

AIR QUALITY

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I was hoping that the Minister of the Environment would come in quickly, at least within the next five minutes, to give me a good response to questions that were advanced over a week and a half ago.

Let me begin with comments from the Ontario Medical Association through Dr Ted Broadway, who says: "Windsor gets first dibs on the death-causing pollution and, as a well person, I'd be concerned about living there. For people who have medical conditions, it's a lethal combination." He says that an "estimated 1,800 people will die in southwestern Ontario" because of bad air. He says, "Children are most at risk from exposure to ozone because they are active outside during the summertime, when ozone levels are at their highest," and goes on to say, "The elderly and those with cardiac or respiratory diseases such as asthma, emphysema and chronic bronchitis are especially sensitive to these air pollutants."

Most concerning of all was a report released by the Environmental Commissioner, Eva Ligeti. She says:

"The Ministry of the Environment has no stated targets for improving air quality in Windsor. In 1995 Windsor recorded the highest provincial concentration for nitrogen dioxide, the most frequent instances of elevated ozone, the highest annual average for total suspended particulates and the highest annual average concentrations of sulphur dioxide. Again, the ministry has collected the data, but because of MOE budget cuts, the committee set up to make recommendations on Windsor's air quality has been disbanded, and the MOE office has lost half its staff."

Minister, I'd like to tell you that since this information became apparent to us, we have formed a new task force in Windsor called the Air Quality Task Force, which is being chaired by Bill Marr, one of our councillors, and

includes participants like Brian Stocks from the Lung Association and Rick Coronado, who you have met, from the Citizens Environmental Alliance.

We have to tell you as well that now you're aware that Detroit Edison in Detroit has decided to start up their coal production again and their Conners Creek coal-producing power plant is scheduled to begin production once again. The worst part about starting up that coal-burning plant is that it will be used especially on days where more power is required, the hottest days of the summer, and in our area that means the most smog-filled as well.

Ontario ministers in our history have taken leadership roles and, Minister, that's what I'm asking you to do today, that you show leadership in acting on our behalf, not just of the residents of Windsor but all those in southwestern Ontario, where you told us on your last visit to Windsor that in fact 1,800 people die prematurely because of air pollution.

I have written letters to you, both to the Minister of the Environment and to the Ministry of Health, specifically the Minister of Health, that because of our air pollution we are seeing more hospitalization and more use of our emergency wards in Windsor because we don't have a plan of action to deal with it. So far I've heard no response.

Windsor specifically has the highest number of days per year in Canada with high ozone levels. Seven air monitors were cut by your ministry in 1997, 50% of the staff in Windsor has been cut, and funding for Windsor's air quality committee as well was cut. The letters, again as stated, were not responded to, and that's just in this last month. Your record as a ministry, sir, is really not one that you should be proud of.

While we all recognize that there is no quick fix for air pollution — we understand that there is a transboundary issue — we think that as the Minister of the Environment you're in the perfect position to take a leadership role. I am asking you specifically for this: a meeting with our Windsor residents, specifically with Bill Marra, the councillor and chair of the task force, who has already agreed to meet with you at your earliest convenience, and with Rick Coronado, the chair of the Citizens Environmental Alliance, who has also already agreed to meet with you, prepared to look for a solution and work in a very non-partisan fashion to develop some kind of plan.

I'm also asking you for leadership in dealing with the states of Michigan and Ohio, remembering that Ontario ministers have a record and a precedent of being leaders on these issues, and for immediate action regarding the decision made by Detroit Edison to start its Conners Creek power plant, to start burning coal after 10 years of inactivity. Remember, you have already missed a deadline to lobby the US Environmental Protection Agency with that very power plant.

Finally, I need to ask you to review and adjust the number of air monitors available in the Windsor area and exactly what you do with the data that might be retrieved from those air monitors. I look forward to your response.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I would like to begin by saying that this government is committed to protecting our provincial air quality. Our government has done more in a short three-year period than what other governments have done prior to the present government.

I have been in Windsor on a number of occasions and have met with the air quality committee, met with many of the individuals.

The member continues to trivialize this particular problem. The member who just spoke holds up headlines, shouts in this Legislature, does not consider this a serious issue, but thinks that the higher her hyperbole, the greater her message. Quite frankly, I get discouraged when members of this Legislature don't put forward factual information, don't bring forward cogent arguments, don't bring forward constructive ideas so we can move this agenda forward.

This government last year did some really positive things for air quality, not only in the Windsor area but right across Ontario. In June 1989, the former government announced a new gasoline formulation to reduce gasoline volatility. We went further last year and lowered that gasoline volatility even lower, to save some 18,000 tonnes of gasoline emissions.

The ministry is very committed to improving Windsor's air quality. The Windsor air quality committee, the community-based group, is a committee in which the ministry actively participates. We have been trying to encourage the leadership of that committee to hold a meeting for some period of time, and we're hopeful that this month or in June they will have that committee. We have assigned one of our ministry officials to that, and they are attempting another way to help that particular committee.

Although transborder pollution is a federal responsibility, and I have seen little activity on the part of her federal colleagues with regard to this portfolio or this file, I am committed to working with Environment Canada and our American counterparts to look at ways of reducing emissions originating in the US which result in pollution in

southern Ontario. I plan to meet again, the second time, with Russell Harding, the director of environmental quality, in early July to discuss these important issues.

You know vehicles are a major source of smog, and that's why this government has introduced Drive Clean, a program for inspection and maintenance of passenger vehicles. This will affect every vehicle in the Windsor area in the very near future. It will reduce some of the air quality problems we have in Windsor.

We have an aggressive plan to revise our 70 standards of air quality which have been left neglected by previous governments for some 20 years. We are now addressing those for the first time. We have for the first time set a particulates standard for particles in the air, which previous governments never set before.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Sterling: We have upgraded — and I wish the member would listen to this — the provincial air quality monitoring network, making it among the most modern and best equipped in North America. Air quality information can be obtained from our information Web site.

We have not sacrificed Windsor's environmental protection. In fact, the southwestern region increased staff in air program by hiring an air analyst, and the monitoring stations in Windsor are being maintained by qualified air technicians. Therefore, the region has increased its resources in air monitoring. That is the fact. We are very concerned about air quality in Windsor and southern Ontario in general.

I would like to complete my argument by stating — from one of her colleagues, who criticized the former government, Mr Wayne Lessard. Between 1985 and 1990, when the member for St Catharines —

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Sorry, your time is over.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. The House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock this evening.

The House adjourned at 1812.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Tuesday 26 May 1998

Mardi 26 mai 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 mai 1998

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NATIONAL UNITY

UNITÉ NATIONALE

Mr Harris moved government notice of motion 10:

Be it resolved that the Legislature of the province of Ontario hereby endorses the following:

All Canadians are equal and have rights protected by law.

All provinces, while diverse in their characteristics, have equality of status.

Canada is graced by a diversity, tolerance, compassion and equality of opportunity that is without rival in the world.

Canada's diversity includes aboriginal peoples and cultures, the vitality of the English and French languages and a multicultural citizenry drawn from all parts of the world.

In Canada's federal system, where respect for diversity and equality underlies unity, the unique character of Quebec society, including its French-speaking majority, its culture and its tradition of civil law, is fundamental to the wellbeing of Canada. Consequently, the Legislature and government of Quebec have a role to protect and develop the unique character of Quebec society within Canada.

If any future constitutional amendment confers powers on one province, these powers must be available to all provinces.

Canada is a federal system where federal, provincial and territorial governments work in partnership while respecting each other's jurisdictions. Canadians want their governments to work cooperatively and with flexibility to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the federation. Canadians want their governments to work together particularly in the delivery of their social programs. Provinces and territories renew their commitment to work in partnership with the government of Canada to best serve the needs of Canadians.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): It is a great honour for me to rise in the House today and speak on the resolution that is before us. I say that because this is a resolution about Canada. Through it, we hear the voices of Canadians and it endorses what we all want: a strong country, a special country, one that will enter the new

millennium filled with hope and opportunity. This resolution endorses the Calgary framework.

On September 14 of last year, I had the pleasure of meeting in Calgary with eight other premiers and two territorial leaders to talk of ways in which we could strengthen the Canadian federation. After much discussion, we agreed on a framework. We also agreed on the importance of asking people across the country to speak to that framework. We agreed to ask them to gather together in large and small groups to talk about their vision of Canada. We asked them to write letters, to answer questionnaires, to make submissions and to discuss national unity in a spirit of cooperation and of hope for a stronger country.

Over these past eight months, these discussions have taken place. They have taken place without the intervention of partisan politics. Following the tradition of my predecessors, I consulted with the opposition leaders before and after my participation in the Calgary declaration.

We agreed to work together in a spirit of non-partisanship, which has characterized the efforts of all Ontario premiers on these important issues. I believe I've been privileged to serve with Premiers Peterson and Rae in a very direct and meaningful capacity in discussions on the national unity front.

I now want to thank Mr McGuinty and Mr Hampton for their input and for their contribution to this nation-building exercise. I also want to thank the members of all parties who participated in the public consultation process. There were approximately 80 MPPs from this House who were privileged to attend public meetings and listen directly to the views of Ontarians on the very important subject of national unity.

I particularly mention the time and the effort put forth by the member for Algoma and the member for Downsview, and of course I am equally grateful to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and the members of the Ontario Speaks coordinating committee for their role in coordinating and facilitating these discussions.

Today, as a Legislature, we're presented with quite a remarkable opportunity, an opportunity that lets us take that first step towards articulating a vision of Canada that includes ideals, beliefs and principles shared across the country; a framework that agrees to equal rights for all, that agrees to independent yet equal status for each province that is tolerant, that is compassionate, that is multicultural, that proudly accepts the diversity of all the people who call this great country home; a framework that

recognizes the unique character of Quebec society and respects its French language, its culture, its system of civil law; one that vows to protect and develop that same unique character.

Within this framework, Ontario would renew its commitment to work in partnership with the other provinces and the territories and with the government of Canada to best serve the needs of Canadians. That is what we all want — a country that works together, a country that is strong together, a country that recognizes and serves the needs of its people together.

J'ai été élevé à North Bay. Nous étions pratiquement voisins des habitants de Témiscamingue au Québec, de l'autre côté de la rivière de l'Outaouais. Mais cette rivière qui nous séparait ne nous a pas pour autant divisés.

Pendant toute mon enfance j'ai joué au curling, au golf et au hockey avec d'autres jeunes du nord-ouest du Québec. Nous étions amis et rien n'a changé. Encore aujourd'hui, je maintiens de bonnes amitiés avec eux.

Ensemble, nous sommes Canadiens, et je tiens à ce que nos enfants et leurs enfants continuent de bénéficier de la richesse d'une telle expérience. J'en avais la conviction à cette époque et je la maintiens encore aujourd'hui : en travaillant ensemble, les Ontariens et les Québécois peuvent grandement favoriser l'épanouissement de ce pays.

Certes, ensemble nous pouvons nous appliquer à créer un climat propice à la création d'emplois, à améliorer notre économie et à préserver les rêves de nos enfants.

Ensemble, nous pouvons chercher à rendre meilleure cette fédération d'un bout à l'autre du pays.

1840

Certainly among my fellow premiers, this is the goal.

There is also a genuine interest in making the federation work better for all taxpayers and all citizens across this great nation. There is a desire to streamline and eliminate duplication in the interest of all. My colleague the NDP Premier of Saskatchewan first coined the phrase "80-20" in reference to the Calgary framework and in reforming our federal system of government. I think the phrase is important.

Let's take the 20% first. While important, and of particular importance to our friends in Quebec, constitutional issues are not the whole picture, because 80% of the reforms necessary in our federation lie in practical administrative changes to improve the way our governments work together. In September we received a solemn commitment from the Prime Minister of Canada to work cooperatively on that 80%.

As a follow-up to that, all first ministers met in December of last year. At that meeting we agreed to enter into serious discussions about reforming the social union — policies and programs like medicare, training and employment insurance — and to do it in a way that respects the jurisdiction of each level of government.

We started negotiations with several thoughts in mind. We wanted to reduce the overlap and duplication between the federal government and the provinces. We wanted both orders of government to be more clearly accountable to their voters. We wanted to reduce federal-provincial

squabbles by establishing clear rules for settling disputes between us. We wanted to ensure that social programs are adequately funded by governments.

I want to say that these negotiations are about improving services to Canadians. They are not about shifting powers between governments. They are about improving services to Canadians. In my view, and being party to those discussions both as premiers and as first ministers, that was unanimous among every leader of this country.

I have made it clear that we support the Canada Health Act, that we want to strengthen rather than weaken the federal-provincial partnership that makes our medicare system possible. I've also assured other premiers that Ontario remains committed to the principle of equalization. We're committed to building Canada and strengthening its unity in all aspects.

The public consultations on the Calgary framework supported the goals we've set out in the social union negotiations. We were pleased that Ontario Speaks proved such a strong and vital forum for hearing the opinions of the people of this province. Indeed, the opinions were as diverse as the population itself. Taken together, the results bode well for the future of this country.

Some 84% of participants supported the approach to strengthening Canada as outlined in the Calgary framework. Tolerance, compassion, freedom, equality and a sense of fairness were seen as the common values important to Canadians. Multiculturalism, the presence of both the English and French languages, and the important contributions of our aboriginal peoples and cultures were cited as the diversities that make Canada special.

Some 76% agreed with the acknowledgement of the diversity of Canada as it was described in that Calgary framework.

Some 89% agreed that powers available to one province should be available to all, and greater accountability and better partnership between governments were stressed as keys to improving service to our citizens.

We all want what is best for our country, and of course we all want what is best for our children and their generation and generations to follow. We all want economic growth and jobs. We all want superior, responsible systems of education and of health care. We all want safe communities in which to live and to raise our families, and led by the economic growth of this province, we are seeing progress towards our collective goal of a prosperous and a united Canada.

Governments across the country are turning the corner on budgetary deficits and, after years of making difficult financial decisions — all governments across this country — they are now reinvesting in the primary resource of this country: our people. We now have an opportunity to work together towards a renewed federation, a federation in which all orders of government work in partnership to serve all of the people.

The Calgary declaration represents a positive first step in helping to change our federation. It's not a constitutional amendment, nor does it pretend to be a constitutional amendment. None the less, this declaration is a very

real signal to the people of Quebec that other Canadians are ready to recognize its unique identity. That is one of the fundamental things the Calgary declaration does.

It says there's no contradiction in being both a Quebecker and a Canadian — no contradiction in that. It says to all Canadians that we want this country to work together to preserve and build on all the traits that make it the best in the world.

Seven provincial governments and two territorial governments have already endorsed the Calgary framework in their legislatures. Along with them, we believe it is an important step towards encouraging governments from across this country to build a strong and a prosperous Canada together.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): It is both a pleasure and a privilege for me to join the Premier this evening in support of this resolution favouring the Calgary framework.

Before I begin, I want to take the opportunity to thank Annamarie Castrilli, my caucus colleague, the member representing the riding of Downsview, for her capable and diligent work on this file and for the assistance she provided not only to me but to all of our caucus.

I also want to thank our caucus, all of whom I can assure you are proud defenders of a united Canada. We had some considerable discussions within our caucus, all members being involved, and I can assure you that the country and its future mean a terrible lot to all of us.

It's a privilege for me to stand here today, not only because I'm a member of the Legislature and because I'm leader of the party, although those are both privileges that I greatly value; it's a privilege simply to stand in this Legislature as a Canadian.

La raison pour laquelle je me sens privilégié de participer à ce débat est que je le fais bien simplement en tant que Canadien.

I think it's important to remember the words of Thomas D'Arcy McGee, words delivered in the last speech he ever made in the federal Parliament, April 8, 1868, when he said, "I speak here not as a representative of any race or of any province but as thoroughly and emphatically a Canadian, ready and bound to recognize the claims, if any, of my Canadian fellow subjects, from the farthest east to the farthest west."

1850

I look at this debate as an opportunity for all of us as proud Ontarians to recommit ourselves to our country, Canada. At the outset, I want to take just a few minutes to remember some of our history. I do this because I believe that in matters like this, where we are trying to shape our future, it's very helpful to first understand our past.

In the 1830s, two men, one from Upper Canada and another from Lower Canada, led movements that struggled against British rule. These men, William Lyon Mackenzie and Louis Joseph Papineau, had a common vision of responsible, accountable government for their constituents. Each led a rebellion in his own province in 1837. The rebellions failed, but the special relationship between the people of Ontario and Quebec had its birth in their

common struggle for responsible government, a government that would respect people for who they were.

Listen to what the Reformers of Upper Canada said in their declaration of July 31, 1837: "Warmest thanks and admiration are due to the Honourable Louis Joseph Papineau and his compatriots for their noble independence in favour of civil and religious liberty and for their opposition to the attempt of the British government to violate their Constitution without their consent. The Reformers of Upper Canada are called upon by every tie of feeling, interest and duty to make common cause with their fellow citizens of Lower Canada."

What's important to understand here is that already back in the 1830s the people of what would later be known as Ontario and Quebec felt they needed each other, that they could be stronger and better by working together.

Their common cause brought two other important leaders together at this time, in the 1840s, Robert Baldwin, the member for York, and Louis Hyppolyte Lafontaine, the member for Terrebonne. These men in their mid-thirties were also inspired by what I call the Canadian dream. When Lafontaine was prevented by the British from seeking re-election in Lower Canada, now Quebec, Baldwin urged him to run in Upper Canada where, amazingly, he won. Now think of that: A francophone in the 1840s from Lower Canada ran in a riding stretching from Uxbridge to Lake Simcoe and won. This man couldn't speak any English. He won because his friend Baldwin here in Upper Canada pleaded with voters to support his friend because they could "make a substantial pledge of our sympathy with our Lower Canada friends and form the bond of union between us."

A year later, Baldwin lost his seat in Upper Canada, and this time, with the help of Lafontaine, was elected in Rimouski. I don't know about the Premier, but there are some days when, as leader of my party, I feel that Rimouski looks quite appealing.

Baldwin and Lafontaine had the kind of courage and vision that could only be inspired by the Canadian dream. Lafontaine once said, "It's in the interests of our two provinces to meet each other on the legislative terrain in a spirit of peace, union, friendship and fraternity." As for Baldwin, he committed to working together for "justice for both provinces upon precisely the same footing in every particular as ourselves."

Lafontaine and Baldwin, like Mackenzie and Papineau before them, had only some basic notion of what this country would become, but their common vision made one thing crystal clear to them: that the future prospects of their respective provinces depended upon their future being a shared future, one where they could somehow be together, different and equal all at the same time. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Two founding partners, Ontario and Quebec, led to a new country, Canada, 10 provinces and two territories strong, offering its citizens the best quality of life in the world.

La relation spéciale entre l'Ontario et le Québec a grandi. C'est un des plus grands partenariats économiques

et culturels de l'histoire. Cette relation les rend, tous les deux, plus forts. J'aime penser qu'à cause de notre histoire, nous les Ontariens et Ontariennes comprenons les raisons du succès de notre pays, le Canada.

Because of our special history and special relationship with Quebec, we in Ontario know why Canada, our country, is so successful. We are successful quite simply because we believe in the power of accommodation, mutual respect, compassion and diversity. We believe that it is better to grow together than it is to grow apart. We understand that every Canadian, like every province, has to give up a little so that we all might gain a lot.

The Calgary framework speaks to these values and that's why I support it. To confirm something the Premier said, the framework is not a constitutional document, and it would be premature to even contemplate a constitutional amendment of any kind until such time as we had a provincial government inside the province of Quebec that was committed to our country.

For me, the Calgary framework is a light in the window for the people of Quebec. By voting in favour of this resolution, we are, in perfect keeping with our history, telling Quebecers that Ontario greatly values the unique nature of their province in terms of its French-speaking majority, its culture and its tradition of civil law.

Pour moi, la déclaration de Calgary est une manière de montrer à la population du Québec qu'il y a toujours une place pour elle au coin du feu. En votant en faveur de cette résolution, nous disons aux Québécois et Québécoises dans le plus grand respect de notre histoire que l'Ontario apprécie grandement le caractère unique de leur province, sa majorité de langue française, sa culture et sa tradition du Code civil.

We're telling Quebecers that Canada is a better place because of them and that Quebec, like all the other provinces and territories, is a better place because of Canada.

Now, I know that our ongoing constitutional struggles have been trying for many Ontarians and some may have grown tired, but I have not. Some may have grown impatient, but I have not. Some many feel dejected because of recent failures to move forward. I do not. I believe that it would be a mistake for us to allow our regrets over yesterday and our frustrations with today to rob us of tomorrow. As leaders in our province, we, the members of this Legislature, do not have the luxury of acting in any way except as committed and vigorous defenders of a united Canada.

The people of Quebec need us to help make the case for Canada to them because daily they are besieged by a provincial government that makes the case against Canada. I, for one, am prepared to make that case time and time again.

Like many of us, including the Premier, I believe, I went to Montreal in October 1995. My wife and I put the four kids in the car and we drove down. We made the decision partly out of fear for the future of our country and partly out of fear for how we would answer the question if things didn't work out and the kids later said, "So, tell me about Canada again."

"It offered the best quality of life on the planet to its citizens. It was a wonderful country."

"And what did you do when it was about to break up?"

We got in the car, drove down and we met with many Quebecers in Montreal — met them in the streets, met them in the subway — and you could easily tell by the look on their faces that they were more than pleased to see us. They were more than pleased to know that there was somebody out there, together with the thousands and thousands of others who visited Montreal on that day, who was prepared to put the lie to the separatist insistence that the rest of Canada just didn't care.

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I won't forget the looks on the faces of those people and I won't forget our responsibility to continually make the case for Canada to them. I won't forget that the majority of Quebecers are proud to be Quebecers and want to be Canadians too. I won't forget. Je me souviens.

As I said earlier, the Calgary declaration is not an amendment to the Constitution. When the time comes to enter that phase, my party will have more to say about some subjects which do not form part of the framework. As pointed out in the final report of the public consultation on the Calgary framework, Ontarians told us that the framework should not derogate from Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We agree. Neither should the framework lead to constitutional change without a guarantee of full public consultation. We agree there too.

I hosted a meeting in my own riding and it was attended by people who were both well-informed and passionate about their country. There were strong differences of opinion, but these people were all connected by their strong belief in Canada.

Les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes ont clairement exprimé leurs inquiétudes à propos de la protection de la culture et des droits linguistiques des francophones vivant à l'extérieur du Québec. Mon parti partage ces inquiétudes.

To be perfectly clear, my party's support for the Calgary framework does not in any way restrict our right and indeed, our responsibility to raise these and other concerns at the time our province sits down at the constitutional table.

The Calgary framework also speaks of the equality of the provinces. Ontario respects and values each of its partners in Confederation, but we would not support any future attempts to accommodate the partners by disabling the partnership. In other words, my party and the province it serves believe in a central government that is strong enough to serve all Canadians.

En d'autres mots, mon parti et la province qu'il dessert croient en un gouvernement central suffisamment fort pour servir tous les Canadiens et Canadiennes.

When all is said and done, I am optimistic that there is so much more Canada can do, so much more Canada can be. It may even be that a new generation of Canadians will not look to words on paper to define themselves and how they live together.

Think of that possibility. It's possible that the majority may some day choose to look at our trade, our prosperity, our compassion, our friendship, our common interests and the fact that we are simply better off growing together than growing apart as the glue that holds the country together. People may some day in this country decide that endless debate over words on paper only serves to weaken the glue. But until that time has clearly come, I will continue and my party will continue to work for a strong and united Canada.

Just prior to concluding, I want to take the opportunity to read a passage, something written by one of our new Canadians, somebody who moved to Ontario from Grenada in the West Indies. The man is a poet. All too often it seems to me that our country seems to sparkle most brightly in the eyes of our new Canadians, as opposed to the rest of us who have been here for a longer period of time. They seem to have a deeper appreciation of all it is that our country offers.

I just want to read a part of a poem that he wrote. It's called, "I'll See You Pretty Maple, My Adopted Home, Sweet Canada." The poet's name is Joseph Bain:

Where first I saw rainbows of men,
Clans and bands from northern territories
to the prairie lands.

Where first I saw cities bursting at its seams,
And customs grow from lands unknown
as from the pages of a dream....

My heirs must learn the songs of this land,
Let that river flow into their souls.
Shake hands with its newness
its innocence enriched.

What a country, what a song,
Beauty to behold.

Preserve it, oh Canada as much as you can.
Speak of its beauty in foreign lands.
Seek fortune in gold not buried beneath,
But in rainbow eyes on your street.

Just say good morning, how do you do?
Love thy neighbour one once said.
Bonjour mademoiselle, bonjour.
We both shiver alike, we are the children
of the sap and ten thousand lakes....

It is with a spirit of undying optimism for the future of Canada that I choose to vote in favour of the resolution before this House.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Let me say at the outset, as other New Democratic Party leaders before me have said, that I do not regard the support or lack of support for this declaration as a matter of patriotism. We should all say to ourselves that we do not question those in this province who do not support this declaration. We don't think of them as unpatriotic.

I won't say for a moment that anyone has a monopoly on patriotism or that anyone can wrap themselves in a flag more effectively than others. There are those who don't

understand why this agreement was made or don't understand how the conclusions came about, and that is why it is our responsibility to communicate the dynamic and the balance that goes into the discussion of this accord.

Let me also say that we are not here involved in the delicate work of Constitution-making. Our work is rather to send a message to the people of Quebec that we in Ontario want to find accommodation with those in Quebec, accommodation that will result in Quebec remaining and continuing to be a part of a wonderful country we call Canada.

Quebec is an integral part of our Canadian fabric and we know that while diversity can be challenging, and indeed it has been challenging, celebrating our differences is a vital key to meaningful nation-building. We should not strive to be all the same and I say it would be a mistake to strive to be all the same. This framework has been described as a gesture of goodwill to Quebec, a statement of our intent to address the dissatisfaction of many Quebecers towards the way Canada works.

Ce document a été écrit comme un geste de bonne volonté envers le Québec, une affirmation de notre intention de faire face au mécontentement de beaucoup de Québécois envers la façon dont le Canada fonctionne. Cela ne satisfait peut-être pas tous les Québécois, mais c'est certainement un pas dans la bonne direction. En adoptant l'accord de Calgary, nous disons aux Québécois qu'ils ont leur place au Canada, que nous les acceptons tels qu'ils sont. Nous reconnaissons que le Québec est un avantage pour le Canada, pas une menace.

I want to say that my colleagues and I support this framework.

Je le dis dès maintenant : nous appuyons ce document.

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Is this document perfect? No, not by a long shot. We need to remember, however, that building social policy, building economic policy, building countries is not an exercise in perfection. It is an exercise in accommodation, it is an exercise in compromise, it is an exercise in finding the willingness to do things together, even if that sometimes means we don't get it all our own way.

My colleagues and I see gaps in this declaration and I want to discuss some of those gaps even as we talk about our willingness to accept it and to promote it. We need to be sure that in any negotiations that come after this, if those negotiations fail to take into account fundamental concerns that the people of Ontario, Quebec and the rest of Canada have, and if we try to gloss over any of those fundamental concerns, then we are probably headed for trouble. We are not here tonight to debate those fundamental concerns, but it seems to me we need to take note of them.

Our country and our province were built on the values of cooperation, compassion and tolerance. We are communities that share, and some would say in that Conservative Ontario today we need to re-emphasize those values, those values we share. I think we need to recognize that within the values of Canada, within the framework of

Canada, we have to continually emphasize the value of sharing.

People have asked us some questions about the Calgary framework: When the government of Ontario agreed to the Calgary framework, did it commit to the principle of preserving and developing the Canadian social union? Did the government commit to provincial and territorial equality? If so, how will the government work to uphold these principles and what will they mean in this context?

Or will the government use this framework to achieve what many have said has unfortunately been achieved by some of our recent international trade agreements, that is, we trade down our social and economic programs? Will the government use this framework to achieve the lowest common denominator in services and programs developed for the protection of our nation's citizens?

It is too early to answer this question now, but if there a notion anywhere that we will trade down on some of what we have achieved in terms of our social safety net and our social investments, then I suggest that there will be trouble down the road.

In the development of this framework, did the government consider the rights of aboriginal peoples? Section 4 of the framework originally contained the phrase "gift of," and almost patronizingly included the aboriginal peoples as one of the gifts without any consideration of the fact that aboriginal peoples are the original inhabitants of this land. We are glad to see that this original phrase contained in section 4 was removed from the proposed resolution, because that certainly would have created difficulties down the road.

Will governments in the future approach any discussions about the diversity and vitality of our French and English languages and the multicultural citizenry of our province, of our nation, with the understanding that we are a country that is changing, growing and evolving every day and that our structure needs to adapt to that change, not the other way around? It seems to me that if we can approach the discussions which come after this from that perspective, we may head off difficulties down the road.

There are a number of questions put forward by Franco-Ontarians. Franco-Ontarians want their place and their rights in Ontario protected. Franco-Ontarians will not sit idly by if they believe that their rights and their services are being left unprotected or are being diminished in a process that goes forward from here.

We need to recognize that it was through government that we built the partnership between French-speaking Canada and English-speaking Canada, that it was through government we created this distinct society we call Canada, a place where our governments used to have very strong tools to utilize in terms of establishing and solidifying our social and economic values, values which made us unique in North America. I say again that people would not sit idly by if through this declaration or through something which flows from this declaration we want to give some of those tools away or diminish some of those tools.

Nous avons un défi devant nous. Je sais que nous pouvons y faire face. Notre travail est de trouver des façons de continuer à construire ce pays. L'accord de Calgary est un pas dans la bonne direction.

We have a challenge before us. I believe we are up to that challenge. Our work is to continue to look for ways to build this wonderful nation called Canada. The Calgary framework is one step in this direction. We must continue to build our nation based on our values, our accommodations and our mutual desires. It is only through our continued determination that Canada will remain the best country in the world in which to live.

I want to say to those who may be inclined to vote against this declaration tonight what I said at the outset: Please let us all keep in mind that we are not involved here in the fine work of constitution-making. As someone who was in this Legislature when the Meech Lake accord came before this Legislature and who saw the negotiations, the discussions, the tough arguments that took place, we are not at that stage yet. As someone who sat through the Charlottetown accord and all of the discussions that went back and forth, sometimes the interminable discussions that went back and forth on the Charlottetown accord and the referendum that was called after the Charlottetown accord, let us recognize we are not at that stage yet.

The stage we are at is, frankly, a very hopeful and a very promising stage, a stage where we can say to our brothers and sisters in Quebec that we are willing to do much, that we are willing to work hard to find a road, to find a way where mutual accommodation may win the day and where Canada as a result may continue to be one of the best countries in the world in which to live. I thank you all.

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Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): It is a great honour for me to speak tonight in support of the Calgary framework and to be present this evening to hear the thoughtful and committed words of our Premier and our two opposition leaders.

During the past few months we have been coordinating a province-wide public dialogue for the people of Ontario on national unity, Ontario Speaks, and the people of Ontario have definitely spoken. They have passionately and strongly expressed their support for a united Canada.

Modern democracies are searching for better ways to meet the needs of their people. We can do no less.

Here in Ontario, Ontario Speaks has been a thoughtful exercise for families and individuals, some older and some very young. They took the time to let us know what they want for Canada's future. They filled in questionnaires in their schools, in their church halls, in public buildings, some when sitting around their kitchen tables, some when having wide discussions with family members and their colleagues. They let us know that they sincerely love their country. They let us know that they strongly want Canada to remain united.

They told us that they want the people of Quebec to stay with us, to work with us and to be proud, with us, of

being part of the best country in the world. They told us they want us, their elected representatives, all of us, to work hard with our friends and our fellow Canadians to make this country an even better place to raise our families and to cherish and to take care of our elders.

They support changes that will require our leadership, our vision and our determination.

After these years of intense soul-searching in Canada, we're seeing the kind of togetherness that no royal commission or political debate could really have predicted. Canadians are making every effort to find new ways to listen to each other and to work together, to turn their hopes and their dreams for our future into reality. Canadians are moving from those debates of the past and finding their own voices for the future. They are setting out the building blocks for creating and managing a renewed Canadian union.

In Ontario there is new optimism, with new jobs, for a brighter economic and social future. The last 12 months has seen more new jobs created in Ontario in the private sector than in any year in our history. We owe it to all our young people, to everyone, to the heads of families, to men and women, to people who want to work, to work together and have jobs.

Governments across our country, governments of all political persuasions are finally conquering the deficits and wasteful spending that threatened the hopes and aspirations of our future generations. Of interest are the studies that balance opportunity and several measures of the quality of life. They consistently find Canada at the top of the list of the best countries in the world in which to live.

Our leaders are working to change the way our country works so that our social programs will work for people so that they will become more effective and more efficient, that they will provide our families with good health care, good educational programs and social programs that will really make a difference to their quality of life.

We do, however, as a Canadian family worry about our future. Will we stay together? It's a real concern. I don't think, in the last 20 years, there has been a young person or an older person who hasn't asked themselves every day at some time during a thoughtful moment, "Will our country stay together?"

What will we tell our youth if we don't manage to support this wonderful country called Canada? Will we make the changes that require our governments to re-evaluate our roles and responsibilities at all levels, our relationships with each other and our responsibility for providing the best possible services to the millions of constituents we represent who count on us, who depend on us, who trust us and who put their faith and their confidence in our ability to do the very best we can?

Experiencing the confidence that's growing in our country, it's exciting to envision the possibilities, the successes, the dreams that could be achieved if only the uncertainty surrounding Quebec's future is settled. When our dollar can jump on the mere suggestion of a new federalist force in Quebec, you get a sense of what could be achieved when the debates of the past are put behind

us, replaced by a new understanding and a focus on the common threads that bind us.

That was the rationale when nine premiers and two territorial leaders met in Calgary last September. It was an important, a timely, a productive effort, focused with a clear recognition of the fatigue that many Canadians feel when they continue to contemplate the breakup of our country. The premiers developed not a plan but a set of principles that came to be known as the Calgary framework.

I'd like to publicly recognize a person I worked very closely with, our Premier, Mr Harris, and his leadership in this regard.

This framework, as our leaders in this House today have stated, is a starting point. I noticed that they all stressed, because we're here together in a non-partisan way, that we start differently. We've all gone through campaigns when we've knocked on doors and people said, "No, not another constitutional round." Therefore, I know, Madam Speaker, you yourself will recognize the need to try something different, and that's what it is.

It's a starting point to express a national commitment to diversity, equality and working together to serve people better — not that we didn't try before, but for some reason it didn't work, and now we'll try a different way — a statement of beliefs, of values, of the principles that should govern a united Canada. Each province chose to develop its own method for consultation in Ontario.

The Premier set out very basic ground rules: The people of Ontario must have every opportunity, many different means, to express their views; their opinions would be directly represented in the final report on the consultation, as far as we possibly could; and MPPs should take every opportunity to listen — which some days we don't get a lot of practice doing. So we did these things.

We endeavoured to avoid the results of past attempts at reconciliation, the travelling bands of politicians holding formal hearings, producing mountains of briefs and reports. With a lot of — I underline — careful thought and ideas from many sources we arrived at our consultation process called Ontario Speaks: A Dialogue on Canadian Unity.

We're proud to say that we all worked together. With the cooperation of my colleague the Liberal MPP Annamie Castrilli and my New Democratic colleague, who has been through this with me on more than one occasion, MPP Bud Wildman, we offered a wide variety of choices for the people of Ontario to make their voices heard: toll-free phone and fax line and Internet access; brochures mailed to over four million Ontario households, and I would add not always delivered; advertisements placed in all Ontario daily and weekly newspapers; brochures sent to our MPP constituency offices, French community and health centres; brochures distributed in French-language weekly newspapers in south and central Ontario and Ottawa's daily French paper, *Le Droit*.

We made a special effort to reach out to young people through Ontario's secondary schools and our colleges and our universities. Chambers of commerce, senior citizens

groups and colleges and universities hosted public meetings. Public meetings with facilitators involved close to 80 of our MPPs.

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Over a period of six months we heard from tens of thousands of people from across the province. They spoke to us, they wrote to us, they faxed and phoned our toll-free line, and they sent us messages over the Internet. In all, approximately 75,000 Ontarians participated. Approximately 65,000 completed questionnaires were received. Over 330 written submissions or letters were received. The Web site attracted over 35,000 hits. Over 2,400 people called our phone lines. Over 2,000 people attended meetings, and many schools, universities and colleges held discussions. Over 1,000 people were surveyed for a March 1998 public opinion poll.

With the range of options we offered, I'm pleased to say that we set a new standard here in Ontario for public consultation, a different way of public consultation, a way of consultation that many perhaps were not aware of, but I think in the future this kind of format will be provided again, and we who can will take advantage of that opportunity.

The people of Ontario did have the opportunity to respond in ways that best suited their busy lifestyles, which we all understand and respect. Whether it be on the Internet, by telephone, by fax or a public meeting, what was important was the many people who took the time to tell us that they truly care, and why they care, about the future of Canada. We are grateful to everyone who participated in this non-partisan dialogue and we thank them for their input.

We also appreciate the work of many dedicated MPPs who sometimes attended or supported more than three or four activities within their own constituencies. We also are appreciative of the educators who held public meetings, who worked with their students and who provided additional opportunities for the people of Ontario to participate in this dialogue.

I'd like at this time to add a special word of thanks to the MPPs who took the issues so seriously and who worked so hard to ensure that the voices of their constituents were heard, sometimes individuals, sometimes people with disabilities, sometimes people who needed very much to have someone listen to them, especially because they cared so much about their country. I'd like to thank the dedicated team of officials who worked and breathed the consultation process: Jane Courtemanche, Rachel Simeon and Charlie Bigenwald. I can't go without mentioning my former deputy, Judith Wolfson, and our assistant deputy minister at the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs, Bill Forward, whose good advice added so much to the process.

We have all of us worked together on this project for a very simple reason: the love of our country and our sincere desire to keep Canada united. As former Premier Bob Rae said just this past weekend on Global Television, "On the big issues of the province, we've never been divided."

Many of us here in this House this evening have experienced this wonderful opportunity in the past. It's always taken a combination of hard work and vision to make Canada succeed, but the results have been well worth it. We have a country to be proud of. We have a country that our children will grow up to know and to learn to say, as our parents and our grandparents have said to us: "We are so very, very fortunate. Keep working hard to preserve what you choose to cherish — your country."

As one of the participants in Ontario Speaks stated about the Calgary framework: "I think this is one very positive step in the evolution of Canada; our concept of what Canada is cannot remain static." Countries move forward, they change, they respond to the times, but more than anything they respond to the needs of their people.

It has been such a pleasure for me personally to listen to the people of Ontario. They spoke with eloquence, with compassion and with heart-wrenching clarity. I attended many public meetings, as did my colleagues, and heard from hundreds of people who care deeply about Canada's future. But I know that in some of the meetings concerns were raised, obviously concerns about future constitutional change, about protecting the rights of francophones outside of Quebec, concerns about the changing face of Ontario society.

Those concerns prompted one facilitator to share this story with the people attending a public meeting in Mississauga. She said she had been working that day with grief counsellors at a downtown Toronto public school. She was helping a grade 6 class deal with the loss of one of their classmates, a little boy who had just died of cancer.

The counsellors asked the children what they would like to do to celebrate their friend's life, and the kids suggested singing the boy's favourite song. That song was O Canada. The children sang O Canada so loudly and with such passion that teachers and students came from all over the school to see what was going on. What they saw was a classroom full of children, their faces shining with tears and with hope; faces that reflected backgrounds from around the world; faces of children who knew exactly what this country means and what it must mean in the future.

That is what the premiers hoped to define with the Calgary framework. That is what the people of Ontario believe was accomplished in the framework.

We heard from Ontarians a clear message of endorsement: 84% of the respondents agreed with the approach to strengthening Canada that was taken in Calgary; 76% agreed with an acknowledgement of the diversity of Canada; 89% agreed that if any future constitutional amendment gives powers to one province, these powers must be available to all provinces; 73% of Ontarians agreed that the unique character of Quebec society, including its French-speaking majority, its culture and its civil law tradition, is fundamental to Canada. That's a message that we hope here in this assembly this evening will be clearly articulated to the people of Quebec.

This level of support was echoed in a public opinion poll conducted in March of this year. In a survey of over

1,000 Ontarians, 87% supported the framework's approach to strengthening Canada. Ontarians who responded to the questionnaires made a real effort to provide input, not only checking off answer boxes but also adding thoughtful, heartfelt, sincere, real, true comments. It was a pleasure for those of us who had the time to take a look. Sometimes members of the media would browse through those questionnaires. It changed your life for just a moment, because it said that that person, those people, took the time to far expand what we had anticipated from our questionnaires.

Sometimes they wrote a whole story about how they came to this country and what it means to them. The people talked about a clear sense of the bonds that unite us as Canadians. Those people placed a great deal of value on developing a culture of generosity and compassion. That general umbrella extends to cover so many areas of our society, from an economy that gives everyone a better chance at a brighter future to modern and reliable services that our government is dedicated to protecting.

You told us that you felt pride in our country, those of you who took time to speak to us, a country built by people from all over the world. You told us that multiculturalism and the vitality of the English and French languages were among the important characteristics that make Canada so very special. As one person said: "We seem to share deeply held views for justice, decency to others, tolerance for people who appear different from ourselves and concern for those who are less fortunate. By and large, I see that most people in Canada are willing to listen, learn and understand." That was a direct quote.

You told us that you want more accountability in government and better partnership between governments to build a federation that works efficiently and effectively to deliver programs and services to all Canadians. Those are big words. They mean a lot to all of us. What the public is expecting, what the people of our country are expecting, is that we'll all work hard to do something about those words.

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As I mentioned, some people did have some concerns; for example, that the framework should not lead to constitutional change without further consultations in Ontario.

While the government has proposed legislation, as other provinces have already done, on our referendum we'll guarantee that Ontarians be polled on questions of constitutional change. Some French-language respondents told us that although they supported the Calgary framework and its recognition of the vitality of the English and French languages in Canada, they want specific constitutional recognition for minority language rights. This House continues to show non-partisan support for minority language rights, as it has since the entrenchment of language rights in the charter in 1982.

National aboriginal leaders raised their concerns with the framework at a meeting with the premiers and territorial leaders in November 1997. We're all pleased that Ontario Speaks was able to address one of these concerns by recommending that the words "gift of" be removed

from point 4 of the English-language version of the framework. We can never, ever take the first inhabitants of our country for granted and we will continue to work with them to make this country a better place for all of us.

Ontario Speaks made every effort to give people the chance to speak out on this important issue. It was a wonderful opportunity for us to listen to Ontarians' views on the future of their country. The people of Ontario have done their part to show that they care very deeply about the future of this great country, including Quebec.

Today, it is the members of this House who have the opportunity to demonstrate to the people of Ontario that we have listened to their views on strengthening Canada. It is our privilege, as members of this Legislature, to participate in many ways and to show our support for the Calgary framework.

People across Canada are watching us tonight and they're listening very carefully to what we say. I have a sense that they will not be disappointed. Our message is a message of support for a strong, renewed and united Canada.

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): Today marks an important opportunity for the members of this Legislature. It isn't very often that we rise to speak about the very nature of our country, about what we value in this country, about what unites us, what we cherish, what makes us uniquely Canadians.

L'importance de ce soir, c'est que nous avons l'opportunité de parler de notre pays, de notre province, de tout ce que nous partageons, de ce qui nous distingue comme Canadiens.

This evening we consider a resolution endorsing the framework for discussion agreed upon by nine premiers and two territorial leaders on September 14, 1997. The framework was intended to structure a dialogue on Canadian unity and seek the views of Canadians. There is no question that the framework as written is imperfect and that the process to elicit dialogue has been faulty.

Yet those people who responded in writing or attended the public meetings told us much about their views and experience of Canada. They told us of a Canada that needed to make all Canadians feel part of the national fabric. They told us of the importance of addressing the needs of the first peoples of this country. They told us of the historic role played by the linguistic duality of French and English and of the recognition of the value of our citizenry drawn from all over the world.

They told us that, as Ontarians, we cherish the specific reality that is Quebec. We value diversity, tolerance and justice. We are passionate about freedom and equality. We have a deep and abiding faith in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. And they told us that Ontarians want a united Canada.

The future of the Canada that shines through in the responses is a Canada that is vibrant, inclusive, just and tolerant. It is a land of opportunity. It is a country that cherishes and fulfils the potential of all its citizens. It is a nation to inspire the world.

It may be trite to say that as Ontarians and Canadians we have long been involved in the shaping of this country, yet I hope you will indulge me, because we so seldom take the time to speak of and take pride in our history.

Ontario was at the table of Confederation. Ontario has been an exceptional partner in every constitutional discussion. Ontario has a long history of partnership and alliance with Quebec. In Ontario, political parties have traditionally set aside their partisanship in the national interest. Liberals, Conservatives and New Democrats have always worked together for national unity, and today it is no different.

Canadians also have a long history of exploring and debating what it means to be a Canadian and what types of institutions give expression to their vision. Recent history has seen the creation, in 1963, of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, which not only proposed the necessary restructuring to give due importance and recognition to the French reality in this country but, in book IV, also explored for the first time the phenomenon of multiculturalism that also characterizes this country.

In 1979, the Task Force on Canadian Unity, co-chaired by John Roberts, a former Premier of this province, and Jean-Luc Pépin, once again explored the partnerships existing in the federation and how they could be improved through respect for diversity and unity.

After the patriation of the Constitution in 1982, the debate of course intensified as the Constitution Act was adopted by all of the provincial assemblies except the Quebec National Assembly. Since then we have seen two rounds of constitutional discussions, from the Meech Lake accord of 1987 to the Charlottetown accord of 1992. Both accords were approved in Ontario but failed elsewhere.

So Ontarians have always played their part and Ontarians are being polled again. The process of consulting Ontarians this time, to be fair, however, has been far less than satisfactory. The start was not auspicious. A committee was announced. Consultation by brochure and mail followed shortly before Christmas. There was a postal strike. French translations were lacking. There was little publicity. The response was naturally not overwhelming. The process was not designed to obtain maximum input.

Those who responded, however, endorsed in general the principles set out in the framework, but they also felt strongly about issues not covered in the Calgary framework, principally that the Calgary framework should not derogate from the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, that the rights of native peoples need to be respected and that the culture and language of francophones living outside of Quebec must be safeguarded.

This is all the more important for us in Ontario. A Liberal government introduced legislation that would guarantee French-language services in Ontario some 13 years ago. These rights may well be undermined as the province plans to download some provincial offences on to municipalities, which are not governed by the French-language legislation.

C'était le Parti libéral de l'Ontario qui a premièrement introduit la loi qui garantit le service en français. Je vous rassure que nous allons insister, sous la direction de notre chef, Dalton McGuinty, que la langue et la culture françaises soient maintenues en Ontario.

Finally, the respondents told us that what we have had during the Calgary framework does not amount to real consultation. They do not see this process as one that leads to constitutional change, and they have therefore asked that there must be some specific and meaningful dialogue if the government wishes to proceed with any constitutional changes in the future.

The principles set out in the Calgary framework have received broad support from those who answered because they are general, and because they are general, they may be open to different interpretations. In order to be clear, let me state what the principles mean to me and precisely what I'm agreeing to this evening.

1950

The first principle is that of the equality of citizens.

That principle is entrenched in section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That means that all Canadians, irrespective of sex, race, religion, social and economic status, are equal before the law.

But equality is not the same as uniformity. In a democracy like ours, nothing forces us to have the same beliefs or preferences as anyone else, and we all have different needs. Therefore, we are both equal and different. Where needs may differ, our respect for equality may in fact require different treatment for individuals to achieve their full potential.

The second principle is that of the equality of the provinces.

As with individuals, the same principle applies to the provinces. They have equality of status, but this does not mean that they cannot be different from one another. Each province is shaped by its own history, heritage, culture, geography, institutions, and sometimes language. This therefore results in different needs. Again, as with individuals, particular needs identified in particular circumstances should be dealt with without jeopardizing the principle of equality.

Our federal system of government has always made room for differences and should continue to do so. Our Constitution explicitly recognizes this principle of differing needs within the framework of equality. Section 36 enshrines the necessity for equalization to ensure that the provinces and their residents are treated equally while their unique needs are respected.

As Canadians, we must ever be mindful that it is important to ensure that all Canadians from sea to sea to sea have reasonably comparable levels of public services and access to same. Nor should this ever jeopardize the importance and the role of a strong central government.

The third principle is that of diversity, tolerance, compassion and equality of opportunity.

Canada is touted far and wide as a model for achieving diversity, tolerance, compassion and equality of opportunity. While our history may have been on occasion less

than exemplary, overall, compared to most nations in the world, our history has been marked by openness and as embracing the new.

We began as a nation shaped by few influences. We are now home to the world. No more is this true than in Ontario. This has in turn made us a stronger province, a stronger nation. It has made us more receptive and has instilled in us a spirit of compassion. It has led to the creation of social programs that unite us and that define us.

The fourth principle is that of Canada's identity which includes aboriginal peoples and cultures, the vitality of the French and English languages and a multicultural citizenry.

This is a cornerstone of every single constitutional discussion we have had. It is a fact of life in Canada. We are a blessed country in which our collective lives are enriched by the aboriginal peoples who welcomed us all to these shores. The differences among them in language and culture are part of the heritage that we all share as Canadians.

We must continue to work together with the aboriginal peoples to respond to the challenges they face and are striving to address in order to achieve self-government and a higher standard of social and economic wellbeing.

We are also fortunate to share a linguistic duality which is part of our identity and our history.

Une des forces du Canada, c'est notre bilinguisme, qui fait partie de notre histoire et de notre identité. Nos deux langues officielles ont nous ont enrichis chez nous et partout dans le monde. C'est essentiel que nous continuons de protéger cette richesse. De façon particulière, il est absolument nécessaire de garantir la langue française ici en Ontario. Il n'y a pas question que mon parti est préparé à faire justement ça.

Let us not forget that sections 16 through 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms protect the linguistic rights of French and English minorities.

We are also blessed with citizens who have originated in virtually every corner of the world. In my own riding of Downsview alone we speak 85 different languages other than English — imagine, 85 different languages — yet everyone lives and works together in what the United Nations has called the most multicultural city in the world. Our multicultural heritage is of course enshrined in section 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

We Canadians and Ontarians have set a world standard of which we can be proud, yet we must continue to work for equal opportunity for all our citizens. We must give real meaning in practice to the laws we have on paper. Our culture, our social fabric and our economy will benefit a thousandfold from our efforts.

The fifth principle is that of the unique character of Quebec society. Given our country's stress on respect and equality, it should go without saying that we endorse the principle of recognition of Quebec's differences. The recognition of Quebec's linguistic and cultural differences is perfectly in keeping with the equality of the provinces and individual Canadians.

There is no question that Quebec is different from other provinces in Canada. The majority of its people speak a different language than the majority of people in other provinces. It has a different culture, although it also has, more and more, a population of people drawn from all over the world who are united by language alone and not culture. Of course, it is the only province to have a tradition in civil law.

If the principle of diversity within equality is to be respected, recognition of the unique character of Quebec society as fundamental to national unity and the Canadian identity is essential. This need not imply more powers, only different ones. As one of the respondents to the Calgary framework stated so well, "No province should be blatantly different but there are diverse cultures...and there should be some allowances made for differences." Another said, "Canada is a country of freedom and equality, all provinces should have the same opportunities." A third said, "I think that all provinces should be treated completely the same and have the same rights, but with the understanding of the provinces' diversity."

The sixth principle is that if any future constitutional amendment confers powers on any one province, those powers must be available to all provinces. We understand the Calgary framework not to make any provision for any amendments in or additions to the division of powers among governments. Still, Ontarians were asked about such a possibility. The vast majority who did respond indicated that there could be no amendment that does not take into consideration the equality of the provinces.

We take this to mean that all provinces must have tools to promote their own development. If a tool is made available to one province, it must be made available to all.

Still, I wish to make it clear that the Ontarians who responded were adamant that this, the Calgary framework, does not give the authority to seek a constitutional amendment. Far from it. It is merely a dialogue. Let me state again that Ontarians told us over and over again that if there is to be any change to our Constitution it will require a full consultation process.

The seventh principle is that of greater partnership among the two levels of government while respecting each other's jurisdictions. Ontarians want their governments to work cooperatively together in the interests of their citizens. The respondents to the Calgary framework said it better than any of us could. They don't want dismantlement of the federation. They want national standards in health care. They want partnerships but they want leadership, and they want a strong federal government.

I would like to cite one of the comments we received: "The Parliament and the government of Canada and the legislatures and government of the provinces should strive, in a spirit of cooperative partnerships, to achieve, step by step, a range of national goals that would strengthen Canada." Let me say that the people of this province are indeed very wise.

The people of Ontario know that the Calgary framework is a first step, and they, like us, will be watching very carefully.

I was not born in this country. My parents made a conscious choice. They chose Canada, a land that was open to immigration, that afforded opportunity, but not without hard work. They came to a land that respected their diversity, that allowed them and their children to flourish, but not without sacrifices. As someone who chose Canada, I am fiercely loyal to it. Vous savez, je ne suis pas née au Canada, mais le Canada, c'est le pays que j'ai choisi et c'est un pays pour lequel je suis prête à me battre pour protéger son caractère, sa noblesse et son identité.

2000

I am grateful for this opportunity to engage in the debate here this evening. I'm grateful to Canada and to the people of Ontario for the opportunity to be here. Lastly, I'm grateful to my leader, Dalton McGuinty, for the confidence he has shown in me. It has been a unique privilege to be involved in this exercise. May I say, long live a strong and united Canada. Vive le Canada fort et uni.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I'm pleased to be able to rise to participate in this debate this evening. As a Canadian, I feel there is so much to celebrate in this country. We have a democratic tradition which is based upon the protection of individual and collective rights, based on the values of equality and liberty, the preservation of basic freedoms that are entrenched in the Constitution, particularly in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in our Constitution.

We live in a Canada that recognizes our linguistic diversity, that values the diversity of cultures and peoples who have come to these shores who helped to build us into a great nation. We celebrate the multicultural and multi-racial diversity of our province as well as of our country. We appreciate that we have a well-educated, skilled workforce, that we have enormous resource wealth, both in Ontario and in Canada.

We recognize that in a democracy we have responsibilities as well as rights. We have a responsibility to manage our economy to ensure a quality of opportunity for all of the people of our nation, to ensure the quality of health care, education and community services for all people no matter what their station in life. We have a responsibility to manage our resources for sustainability for future generations, to husband and to act as stewards of the great wealth we have been endowed with.

I want to say though, as someone who has participated in these debates in the past, that I recognize fully that my country, Canada, is more than the sum of its peoples and its resources, it's more than the sum of its parts. Canada for me is an experience; it's a united and uniting experience; it's an experience of struggling against the elements, elements which were often harsh and difficult at times. Canada's an experience of building community and building a nation. It's a shared experience. In my view, Canada is indeed more than the sum of its parts.

Canada is a concept, an idea. It's an idea and a concept that is worth struggling for to ensure that we are able to maintain a united nation that we can pass on to our children and their children. We look forward in this debate but we also look back. We, as descendants of the

aboriginal peoples and pioneers and immigrants from all over the world, owe it to our forebears who endured these hardships of the past, to do as much as we can, not only for ourselves, but for future Canadians.

It's our responsibility to strive to maintain and strengthen our nation which is united in diversity. I think that the Calgary framework is an expression of opinion. In a sense, it's an attempt to describe the idea of Canada, to express, in some words on a piece of paper, the vision and hope for Canadian unity that we all share. As my leader said, this is not constitutional language. It's not even proto-constitutional language.

In the original framework as it was negotiated, we recognized that the people of Ontario have a vision for a Canadian federation, one that reflects a shared commitment to equality and diversity and to working together to keep Canada strong and united. I think all of us in this assembly this evening share those views and I think it's appropriate for us to give expression, in passing this resolution, to this vision and to the values that unite us as Ontarians and Canadians.

The framework, as moved by the Premier, makes a number of statements that can be interpreted in a number of ways. The first point I think on the face of it no one could argue with, at least I hope no one could argue with: "All Canadians are equal and have rights protected by law." I suspect that means what it was intended to mean, that all Canadians are equal before the law and the rights that are provided for in the Constitution are protected by the Constitution and laws of this country.

But I think we have to also recognize that in the Canadian federation, in our nation, as great as it is, a country that is recognized by the United Nations repeatedly as the best place in the world to live and to work, for all the efforts of people throughout our history and governments throughout Canada, in terms of condition, we do not have economic equality. Many would say we have, and should have, and maintain equality of opportunity, but all of us have to recognize that we do not have economic equality.

I've been coming to this place since 1975. I remember when I first arrived in Toronto as a young, newly elected member of the Legislature. Coming from northern Ontario, I used to walk around this large metropolis, the downtown area in particular, and on those few occasions when I used to see someone sleeping on a grate, I was appalled. I was alarmed. On a couple of occasions, I called a policeman because it was winter and I was afraid this individual might indeed freeze to death.

You would think as we've developed and grown as Canadians, as a nation, with all of the resource wealth that we have, the tremendous ability and capacity for economic growth that we have, those few people who are down and out that I used to see when I first came to Toronto in 1975 would no longer be seen on the streets of this metropolis. Instead, in most recent years, there seem to be more and more of those homeless people sleeping on grates in the wintertime, ironically sleeping on grates of some of the most expensive pieces of property in Canada. Right there when you see the bank towers in downtown Toronto and

someone sleeping on the grate to keep warm outside of a bank tower, we see exemplified an increasing gap between the haves and the have-nots in our society rather than a decreasing one.

Some would say, "Yes, indeed, this is shameful," but I would say that it must inspire all of us, whatever our political view, whatever our ideology, as legislators, as elected representatives of the people of Ontario, as elected representatives in Canada, to do all we can to ensure that that gap is decreased rather than increased. So when we talk about what our vision of Canada is and what Canada means to us, it must mean, yes, all Canadians are equal and have rights protected by law, but it must also mean that not only are all Canadians, we hope, treated equally by courts in this country but all Canadians do indeed have equality of opportunity and hopefully we strive for the day when all Canadians have equality of condition.

2010

Another point in the declaration states, "Canada's diversity includes aboriginal peoples and cultures, the vitality of the English and French languages, and a multicultural citizenry drawn from all parts of the world." There are those in this country who look at the diversity of our nation, whether it's the duality represented in the main linguistic groups in Canada, the French and the English, or whether it includes all of the ethnic groups that have come to make up what is such a diverse and multicultural society that we have and which is celebrated here in Toronto in particular, but throughout Canada, and say that diversity means that we cannot be united.

In my view, those people who take that position are most shortsighted. They don't understand the tolerance that we have and we celebrate as Canadians. Despite the fact that we celebrate the diversity of the many cultures that have come to be represented in our society and that make us such an interesting place to be and a place which, as we say in the declaration, is graced by diversity, tolerance, compassion and equality of opportunity that is without rival in the world, obviously there are some in our society, I hope a small minority, who seem to resent the immigrants who come to our country, who seem to see them as people who take away economic opportunity for Canadians who have been here before.

Surely, as the UN has said, we are such a wonderful place to live based on our educational levels, based on the health care that we have, based on the kinds of programs that we have for social services, based on our ability to work and live together, based on the quality of life that we have, we recognize that the reason there are so many immigrants coming to Canada is that indeed it is such a wonderful place and that we benefit from their contributions to our society, all of us; indeed that Canada is more than the sum of its parts.

It's unfortunate, however; if we say in one breath that we have equality of opportunity that is without rival in the world, we must not forget those homeless people sleeping on the grates. What have governments done in recent years in Canada — I mean governments of many different stripes — to help those who are vulnerable in our society

and ensure they have equality of opportunity? What have they done to ensure that they are given an extra leg up to make it possible for them to take advantage of the opportunities that the rest of us have been able to benefit from? Unless we make a commitment, as my leader indicated, to a true social union in this country, then that statement that we enjoy equality of opportunity that is without rival in the world somehow sometimes rings hollow, and I regret that.

I've mentioned the linguistic duality of this country. One section of the framework says:

"In Canada's federal system, where respect for diversity and equality underlies unity, the unique character of Quebec society, including its French-speaking majority, its culture and its tradition of civil law, is fundamental to the wellbeing of Canada. Consequently, the Legislature and government of Quebec have a role to protect and develop the unique character of Quebec society within Canada."

Sometimes there are voices raised in this country that are not very generous, voices that express themselves in both English and French that perhaps would take issue with the statement I've just read from the declaration. We have a federal system partially because of a deadlock that developed in the 1840s in this province, which was then Upper and Lower Canada, which led to divisions and a political deadlock that was resolved by various colonial leaders meeting together and deciding that they should form a united dominion which also reserved for the parts of that dominion rights and responsibilities for governing.

Central to that was an understanding between what then were Canada West and Canada East or Upper and Lower Canada that we had two majorities represented in those provinces and that those majorities must be able to survive — not just survive but flourish — and be protected, but also an understanding that the minorities within those societies would also be able to live and to flourish and continue to be protected and have their rights protected. We chose to do that through a federal system.

Who can argue that in Canada Quebec is unique? Who can argue that in North America Quebec is unique? Who can argue that we in Canada have benefited from that uniqueness? Who can argue against the basic fact that one of the things that makes Canada special in the world is that we respect and celebrate the culture and language of our province to the east? Who can argue that? Yet sometimes there are less generous voices who don't celebrate that.

I think in voting for this resolution this evening, the Calgary framework, we, as a Legislature, are saying that we reject those ungenerous voices, and that we accept and celebrate the diversity and the duality of Canada.

I think it's important that we recognize that in this statement we are saying that since Quebec is unique, a French-language majority in a sea of English speakers in North America, we understand that the government of Quebec and the Legislature of that province have a unique and special role to protect the language, culture and law system of that society. In recognizing that uniqueness, it

does not diminish Canada but rather it celebrates again that Canada is more than the sum of its parts.

I recognize, as we've said before, that this is not a constitutional amendment before us, that we are trying to express a description of the vision of Canada, the idea of Canada, our concept of the country. But I do want to say that two sections that say, "All provinces, while diverse in their characteristics, have equality of status," I accept that. Obviously, in our constitutional framework, all provinces have equal status as provinces.

I must also state that all of us recognize certain provinces in this country are large, have tremendous resources, tremendous wealth and potential, while others are smaller and perhaps do not have the same opportunities for economic growth and development, and that we recognize that as Canadians in all of those province we owe each other and we respect the need in our federal system to assist those who may not have the same opportunities as others.

2020

Having said that, one of the parts of the framework says, "If any future constitutional amendment confers powers on one province, these powers must be available to all provinces." Of course that doesn't mean that all provinces will in fact avail themselves of those powers, but it does state that all provinces can avail themselves of those powers.

I suppose you might argue that the devil is in the details. There are many — not those who are not generous, not those who do not celebrate the diversity of this country — who do not appreciate the duality of this nation, who do not understand the importance of Quebec and its uniqueness, who also might have some difficulty in how this plays out in the future.

All of us recognize that we are a federal system, that the provinces have powers to ensure their citizenry is governed well but that we also have a federal government which has responsibility to all Canadians and for all Canadians and must represent what all Canadians' aspirations are together. In accepting this statement, we must also make clear that we believe in a strong central government that can set standards and ensure that all Canadians benefit from our wealth, our resources and our social programs throughout the country, no matter in which province they reside.

I suppose I've developed a bit of a reputation in this House for having perhaps certain hobby horses and I don't apologize at all for that. I would say, though, that there is one area I want to emphasize, and I've emphasized this over the years as a representative of my area of the province, of northern Ontario, and of the whole province. In saying yes to Quebec, which I think is one of the central things we are attempting to do here tonight, we are not saying no to the aspirations of anyone else. We are not saying no to the aspirations of the many, many divergent ethnic and racial groups that make this metropolis such an interesting place to live and to visit.

We are certainly not saying no to the aboriginal peoples of Canada. We say Canada's diversity includes

aboriginal peoples and cultures. I'm glad that the resolution or the framework was changed to get rid of what was considered the patronizing comment about the "gift of" the aboriginal peoples that the chiefs raised concerns about.

Having said that, I regret that we just state, "Canada's diversity includes aboriginal peoples and cultures," that we don't recognize that the aboriginal peoples of this country are the original people of this land, that they have inhabited these areas we now call Ontario, Quebec and all of the other provinces of Canada and the territories of Canada since time immemorial, that frankly the ancestors of the Europeans who inhabit this country would not have survived when they arrived on the shores of North America except for the assistance, compassion and goodwill of the Amerindians of North America, and of Canada particularly, that there was a vibrant, living community and culture in this nation, in what is now Canada, long before Giovanni Caboto sailed to Newfoundland, or there was Samuel de Champlain or Jacques Cartier or any of the other European explorers who we often were taught in school discovered North America.

In fact a lot of those people were lost and they showed up on these shores, struggled ashore from their ships half starving and wouldn't have survived — sometimes, unfortunately, didn't survive — without the assistance of the people who were already here.

I hope that the reference to the aboriginal peoples and cultures is not just a perfunctory reference. I hope it does not in any way diminish what I believe to be a genuine commitment of the majority of Canadians to recognizing the inherent right of self-government for aboriginal people in the Constitution of Canada at some point, because whether we as Canadians recognize that right or not, it is indeed inherent, and no matter what we do to try and take away from the ability of our aboriginal peoples to govern themselves and to determine their own destinies, it is doomed.

We've got to make that one statement and ensure that aboriginal peoples can aspire to the equality of opportunity that we talk about in this framework and that we celebrate. When we say we celebrate the diversity of Canada, we should be celebrating those many cultures of the aboriginal peoples. So I believe that we must restate our commitment to aboriginal self-government and our commitment to ensuring that those governments, as they are established and grow, have the resources to ensure aboriginal peoples will be able to benefit from the wealth they have shared with us.

Also, I think we all must recognize that in celebrating and saying yes to Quebec, we are not in any way taking away from the rights of francophones who live outside of that province. As a matter of fact, in recognizing and saying yes to Quebec and the unique character of Quebec with its language and culture, we are also saying yes, saying oui, to the francophones who live in Ontario and every other part of Canada.

The last point of the declaration says:

"Canada is a federal system where federal, provincial and territorial governments work in partnership while

respecting each other's jurisdictions. Canadians want their governments to work cooperatively and with flexibility to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the federation. Canadians want their governments to work together particularly in the delivery of their social programs. Provinces and territories renew their commitment to work in partnership with the government of Canada to best serve the needs of Canadians."

All of us of course agree with those statements. Obviously all Canadians want our governments to work in cooperation with one another. They want to ensure that we have social programs, that we maintain our social programs, that we enhance our social programs, that we respond to the needs of the vulnerable, the sick, the elderly and the poor throughout our nation, whether they be in this rich metropolis of Toronto, in the outposts of Newfoundland, in the small communities of the Yukon, on the Prairies or in the rural communities across Canada. We all agree with this.

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I suppose this is what the Premier referred to when he quoted our colleague from Saskatchewan Mr Romanow. He said, "This is an 80-20 business," that 80% of this problem is making the federation work for the benefit of Canadians.

All of us expect that and accept it, but I want to make sure that all of us understand that we do not believe in our party that flexibility, ensuring efficiency and effectiveness, means the flexibility to diminish the social safety net in our country or the flexibility to ensure that the protections we have for ensuring equality of opportunity are somehow limited in our nation.

We've seen the negotiation of agreements across the world: the North American free trade agreement and its expansion into wider trade agreements, and now the proposal for the multilateral agreement on investment that would essentially make it possible for multinational corporations to operate in this country with rights that would make it very difficult for governments, whether they be federal or provincial governments, to use the tools available to them to ensure our country remains sovereign, that will give rights to multinational corporations that will make it very difficult for governments to take action to ensure equality of opportunity and to ensure the protection of the safety net.

I want to say categorically that we in this party reject such agreements, that we stand for not only flexibility and efficiency and effectiveness in the federation but for a sovereign Canada, a Canada that can determine its own destiny and that is not limited by international agreements such as the proposed MAI.

Overall, what does the passage of the Calgary framework resolution mean for our country? I'm not sure. I don't think any of us can be certain. It means that we as a Legislature, as representatives of the people of Ontario, are sending a positive message to Quebecers. It is saying that we support the protection of their uniqueness. It says that we believe in cooperation. It says that we stand for the unity of our nation.

But as I said a number of times, it is not constitutional language. We celebrate Canada, we celebrate our diversity, but the devil is in the details. There are difficult negotiations ahead of us to answer a number of the questions that have been raised in this debate, and many other questions that will be raised by Canadians from coast to coast to coast. It will not be easy. Canada is a concept and an idea, but it has never been easy.

Some would say they want closure to this debate — many would say that, I suppose, in Canada — but I suspect that the whole history of this country is the history of this debate and that one thing that makes Canada unique is this debate. I think we can work together for the unity of our great nation if we have goodwill, if we have understanding and generosity, but I don't think the passage of this resolution will bring closure to this issue and to this debate.

The Calgary framework itself may be a beginning, a new beginning in the struggle for Canada, in the experience of Canada as we struggle together to ensure we continue to remain the best place in the world to live and to work. Thank you.

M. Gilles E. Morin (Carleton-Est) : C'est un honneur pour moi de participer à ce débat. Ce que je veux vous exprimer sont les sentiments qui sont profonds dans mon cœur, des sentiments comme bien d'autres aussi partagent.

As I stand here today, I have a very strong sense of déjà vu. We have been here before and in due course we'll probably be here again. I know some people may feel discouraged by that idea, but that is something we should guard against. This issue is too important not to take seriously. It may not, on the face of it, affect our day-to-day lives. However, the deeper issues like this one have the potential to shape who we are as a people for decades to come. As a result, it is our responsibility to decide on the principles that will govern us. Are we to be guided entirely by self-interest, or is our vision broader than that?

Whether we like it or not, there are real dangers in ignoring the question of national unity. I'm afraid the side that is most invested in the outcome of this ongoing debate will win. We must be involved if we care about the future of a united Canada and we must prove that we care through whatever means available. I believe the Calgary declaration is the necessary vehicle at this time.

A few months ago, my colleague Jean-Marc Lalonde of Prescott and Russell and I held a public consultation on Ontario Speaks. Participation was less than overwhelming but its outcome was revealing. We were very moved by what the participants had to say. They spoke about their love for Canada through their own individual stories. They have not given up on Canada.

Participants felt that our constitutional problems were not so difficult in comparison with the problems that people in other countries have to face. The overall feeling was that Canadians are a generous people at heart. As a result, constitutional debate should be conducted with the spirit of generosity.

The turnout was low at our meeting, as it was at others. I believe what that represents is simply a sense of helplessness on the part of Ontarians who care very deeply about the future of this country but don't know what they can do about it. We've been talking for a long time and nothing seems to get resolved.

The discussion about our future as a country should be a dynamic and engaging process and we should not get discouraged. For as long as we are reaching out to each other, as long as we are attempting to define ourselves through this process, our country is a living entity. We should be encouraged by that and take heart from it.

We must remember that Canada is a young country that is still evolving, and this process of change is part of the history of a great nation. Most countries are much older than ours and have suffered much greater upheavals. Ancient states like England and France matured over a period of 800 to 1,000 years while we have many years to go. Above all, we must not lose patience or turn away from our challenges. To become a nation takes time.

I hope we will come to be known in history as a nation that always believed in its future and in the vital importance of all its divergent aspects. We have a challenge like none other in that regard. A nation of solitudes in the most blessed land on the face of the earth, I hope that soon we come to understand and acknowledge our common heart.

2040

I think we should commend the provincial premiers for coming together to draft the Calgary declaration. The premiers have shown genuine leadership in putting forward a statement of values that attempts to express what we believe as Canadians.

Those values include a recognition of Quebec as an essential element in the fabric of this nation. From everything I've heard over the years, I'm certain that, no matter how we may agonize over this prolonged debate, that sentiment is universal. Canada would be drastically diminished in spirit and in fact if we lost Quebec. To me, that outcome is inconceivable.

We have had other opportunities to assert outright the inclusiveness of our vision, but we let them slip away. I was a member of the select committee on constitutional reform when it was considering the Meech Lake proposal. We worked hard and long into the nights to try to secure an acceptable solution to the issue. We felt great excitement and hope that our work would make a difference. Alas, it was not to be.

I believe that Meech Lake and Charlottetown were honest attempts to resolve the constitutional dilemma but our courage failed us, to my great regret. I personally believe that we would not be in the troubling situation we are in if we had taken the chance with Meech Lake. Through fear of the unknown or through agonizing over details, we let the debate divide us and these divisions continue to cause us pain.

I speak today as a francophone who was born in Quebec and raised as a Canadian nationalist. Let me tell you that there are a great number of us, both outside and inside Quebec, who love this country passionately. The issue of

the future of this country is of deep interest to most francophones who in their minority status continue to have a unique perspective on Canadian history, as do I.

My own experience proves to me how much we've changed. I must tell you that it was long ago when I began my career as a then unilingual officer in the Canadian armed forces eager to serve my country. Long gone too is the attitude of the anglophone officer who, on meeting me for the first time, told me to "speak white." Since that time my English has improved as I'm sure his tolerance of my exoticism has as well. He may even have learned to speak some French for all I know.

What I do know and what I am absolutely sure of is that we must continue to grow as individuals and as a nation, as we have done since those days of my youth. We must never give up on the dream of a strong and united Canada that embraces all of its peoples in all their diversity.

There is plenty of room for honest and lively debate and for disagreement, because the only thing that can destroy us is indifference. We have to be careful of the attitude of not caring any more. We really, really can make a difference. In recent years whole nations have been reborn and strengthened by the will of a majority of individuals who insisted it happen. We too can make it happen. Each time we engage in a debate we learn more. We come out of ourselves to embrace a wider view. That can only be to our long-term benefit as individuals and as a country.

I'm terribly afraid that if we don't remain actively committed to the cause of Canada we will one day turn around and it will be gone. What will we tell our children then when they ask us what happened at the close of what was supposed to be Canada's century? What responsibility will we be forced to carry for our country's destruction?

The responsibility does not rest with politicians alone. An involved public invigorates a discussion in a way that can lead to real breakthroughs, but this requires maturity and commitment from all participants.

Mistakes have been made in the past. They continue to be made today. However, if we wait for a perfect solution, we will be permanently stalled. The Calgary declaration is not a perfect solution. We have to face the fact that there are probably no solutions. But it is a beginning of perhaps the real solution: unity in Canada.

I don't believe that there is any way to turn away from a future that is necessarily unpredictable. There are no guarantees. But we must believe in our ability to face all challenges and to reach a just compromise. I am supporting the Calgary declaration because I believe it is our best hope for getting to the next stage of building this country. We have come a long way. The future is in our hands. Let's not squander it.

M. Gilles Pouliot (Lac-Nipigon) : Ce soir, en ce soir d'attente, c'est au tour de l'Ontario de se faire entendre. Chez nous ce soir nous emboîtons le pas. Nous faisons donc partie de cette armée de Canadiens et Canadiennes qui disent Oui à la déclaration de Calgary.

Il aurait été là trop facile de jouer à la bagatelle, de chercher une ou deux peccadilles, quelque raison bénigne pour dire Non. Notre parti, l'Assemblée, a choisi l'alternative : le positif, l'espoir au lieu du négatif, au lieu de la peur, au lieu de l'anxiété. Dans les quelques moments qui me sont accordés, on a pensé sur le papier. En faisant partie du texte, je cite, avec votre attention, avec respect, à la page 9 :

«Dans ce régime fédéral» — parce que la déclaration de Calgary, ce n'est pas plus, ni moins que ça — «où le respect pour la diversité et l'égalité est un fondement de l'unité, le caractère unique de la société québécoise, constitué notamment de sa majorité francophone, de sa culture et de sa tradition de droit civil, est fondamental pour le bien-être» de nous tous, pour le bien-être «du Canada. Par conséquent, l'Assemblée législative et le gouvernement du Québec ont le rôle de protéger le caractère unique de la société québécoise au sein du Canada et d'en favoriser l'épanouissement.

«Les peuples autochtones avec leurs cultures, le dynamisme des langues française et anglaise et le caractère multiculturel d'une population issue de toutes les régions du monde sont des éléments dont est constituée la diversité du Canada.»

Ce soir, encore une fois, on dit au Québec tout simplement, regardez la main de l'Ontario qui te salue, qui te fait signe de te joindre à tous les Canadiens et Canadiennes. Ne nous quitte pas. Chez vous, on se sent chez nous.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I join this debate, and many of the sentiments that have been expressed here I certainly would agree with. But there also is a time for some plain talk on an issue as important as this.

Last November 12, the Premier of Ontario, Mike Harris, wrote to each of us MPPs to launch Ontario Speaks, the public consultation process on the principles for future constitutional change contained in the Calgary framework.

He said: "We are encouraging input from all Ontarians on their vision for Canada and for Ontario's place in the federation. We also want feedback on the Calgary framework agreed to by the nine premiers and the territorial leaders in September.

"This process provides an excellent opportunity for all MPPs to serve their constituents in the most fundamental way by making sure their voices are heard on a subject that concerns every Ontarian and every Canadian."

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Other provinces were engaged in the same exercise, and I naively thought we would be able to incorporate what we heard in Ontario's response into the framework. Apparently, I was rather naïve, for today, after seven provinces and two territorial governments have gone through their review, permitting extensive debate by all legislators and bringing their issues to the fore, we here in Ontario are being limited to a three-hour debate, with no opportunity to incorporate the concerns raised by the citizens of Ontario to give meaningful direction to those who would shape the future constitutional reform in our country.

This is wrong, because we heard concerns over the Calgary framework. We heard concerns about the primacy of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We heard concerns about protecting francophone communities outside Quebec. We heard concerns about ensuring public consultation in the event of future constitutional amendments. But this government has decided not to incorporate these concerns in Ontario's response. Why?

Why can the Legislature of the Yukon Territory express its concerns over the viability of francophone communities outside Quebec, but Ontario, with the largest francophone population outside of Quebec, cannot? Why can Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick express their views through preambles, but Ontario cannot? Why can the Legislature of British Columbia introduce additional concerns that represent their community, but Ontario cannot? Why is it that in every Legislature across Canada all legislators can speak to what the Premier of our province said was a subject that concerns every Ontarian and every Canadian, but here in Ontario we cannot?

As you've heard, our caucus has had specific concerns, legitimate concerns, that we and others had heard from Ontarians which we wish to form part of Ontario's response. We sought to do this not by amending the seven principles of the Calgary framework but by adding language to a preamble which was previously introduced in this House, as was done in other provinces. We were refused by the government. Indeed, no amendments are to be considered tonight in this short, three-hour debate.

This is a fundamental error, because the framework, which is to provide direction for future constitutional amendments, repeats the same mistake as the failed Meech and Charlottetown accords. In replacing the "distinct society" clause of those two failed accords with new language that seeks to recognize the unique characteristic of Quebec, the framework would permit the differential application of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in Canada, to be applied one way in one part of Canada and another way in another part. This, many Ontarians believe and I truly believe, is insupportable.

This is not meant to deny either the distinctiveness of Quebec or the uniqueness of Quebec within Canada, for truly it is — c'est évident, c'est clair, c'est vrai — but surely a right is a right is a right. Surely we all mean that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is to apply equally to all Canadians no matter who they are or where they live.

Let us be clear what the "distinct society" clause in the Meech and Charlottetown constitutional proposals was meant to do. According to the government of Canada in a publication produced in support of the Charlottetown accord, called *Shaping Canada's Future Together*, "The government of Canada proposes that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms should be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and promotion of a vibrant French-speaking society in Quebec." These are good words, but why would we do this to the charter? What is in the charter that could be interpreted one way in one part of Canada and another way in another?

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms covers such fundamental rights as freedom of conscience and religion; freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media communication; freedom of peaceful assembly; and the freedom of association. It also covers democratic rights including elections to Parliament, to provincial legislatures; mobility rights; legal rights including the right to life, liberty and security of person; and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance to the principles of fundamental justice. It includes equality rights, in particular that every individual is equal before or under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability. It includes rights relating to the official languages of Canada and minority-language educational rights.

These are the rights that our Constitution, through the charter, bestows on every citizen in our country. Surely we do not wish to create different classes of Canadians based on different qualifications or interpretations of the charter.

I have some familiarity with this. Let me give you two examples from our own history in Canada. These are landmark cases in civil liberties which will show you not only how fragile our liberties are in this country but will illustrate as well the potential effects of such an interpretative clause of our charter.

In the 1930s and 1940s in Quebec, Jehovah's Witnesses were forbidden to distribute religious material in Quebec City and elsewhere in the province. This prohibition was appealed through the courts. One of the arguments being put forward by the Quebec government of the day in favour of the law was that Quebec was then a predominantly Roman Catholic society and that Jehovah's Witnesses activity was anti-Catholic and therefore should be prohibited. The Quebec Superior Court upheld the law. One of the judges actually agreed with this argument. But eventually the Supreme Court of Canada, in a narrow decision in 1953, threw it out as violating civil liberties involving the freedom of religious belief. What recourse would there have been if the government of the day had invoked the unique character of Quebec's laws to defend its actions?

In 1941, the Duplessis government enacted the so-called padlock law, the Communist Propaganda Act, which gave authority to padlock premises suspected of being used to disseminate Communist ideology and propaganda. This too was appealed through the courts. Again, one of the arguments put forward by the government of Quebec in favour of this law was that Quebec was predominantly a Roman Catholic society, that Communism was atheistic and anti-Christian and should be prohibited. The Quebec Superior Court upheld the law, again, using that same argument. But eventually the Supreme Court of Canada in 1957 struck it down as violating civil liberties involving freedom of association and freedom of expression. Again, what recourse would there have been if the government of the day, PQ or otherwise, had invoked the

unique character of Quebec laws to defend its actions? This is what we're talking about. Is this a path we wish to go down? I think not.

Here we are on a vote on the Calgary framework where the government asks all of us to support this latest effort in nation building. Yet we have a government that refuses to listen to the concerns raised by Ontarians, which refuses to permit all legislators to participate in this most important subject, which refuses to include statements to reflect the legitimate concerns raised by our fellow citizens. I can't support this. I believe, as do all of us in this place, in a strong, united Canada. I want my native province to remain in it. But I cannot concede to political expediency and see our Charter of Rights and Freedoms fragmented, for there a greater evil lies.

A right is a right is a right. We should not be afraid to remember that. My vote in opposition to this framework is to signal to those who would shape our future how important our charter and our liberties are.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Je veux prendre ce temps que j'ai dans le débat pour soulever quelques questions qui sont, je pense, très importantes et qui ont été soulevées par mon collègue M. Wildman d'Algoma, mon chef, et sur la question d'où les francophones hors Québec se trouvent dans tout ce débat constitutionnel qu'on est des.

Je veux faire un point très important. Il faut réaliser que ce qu'on a devant nous aujourd'hui, ce ne sont pas des amendements constitutionnels à ce point ; ce n'est pas un document constitutionnel. Ce qu'on a, simplement, c'est une vision, c'est un papier qui essaie de donner une vision de ce qui est notre pays, et de ce qu'on croit être les principes fondamentaux de notre pays.

Je suis en désaccord avec le député qui a parlé avant nous. Si on regarde cette déclaration de Calgary, on dit que «Les peuples autochtones, avec leurs cultures, le dynamisme des langues française et anglaise et le caractère multiculturel d'une population issue de toutes les régions du monde sont des éléments dont est constituée la diversité du Canada.»

Il y a certains dans la communauté francophone qui auraient voulu voir un amendement à cette section qui reconnaîtrait en Ontario les droits des francophones de la province. Je dis à mes collègues dans l'Assemblée, je pense que ce qu'on a besoin de faire, c'est de regarder, hors ce document, possiblement, une motion qu'on essaierait d'amener avant le gouvernement fédéral de la part de cette province d'aborder, finalement, cette question.

On a besoin de dire en Ontario, «Est-ce qu'on croit que les francophones de cette province ont des droits qui doivent être protégés sous notre constitution ? » Si la réponse en est oui, on a besoin de le faire, mais pas dans cette entente. On a besoin d'amener un amendement qui est séparé et qui est supporté par tous les trois partis pour venir en avant avec cette question.

On oeuvre toujours dans cette province — les derniers gouvernements, le gouvernement de M. Peterson, le gouvernement de M. Rae, et, j'espère, des fois, le gouvernement de M. Harris — pour trouver des manières

de protéger les droits des francophones dans cette province. On regarde l'avance qui a été faite avec la Loi 8, qui protégeait et donnait certains droits aux francophones d'être capables d'aller chercher les services en français chez eux, où qu'ils demeurent, pour leur donner l'accès au gouvernement. C'était une avance très importante pour la communauté francophone.

On regarde ce qui est arrivé sous le gouvernement de M. Rae, la création du Collège Boréal et du Collège des Grands Lacs, les services nombreux qui ont été mis en place par le gouvernement de M. Rae pour assurer que les francophones dans cette province auraient les mécanismes et les institutions nécessaires pour vivre dans cette province en français.

L'Ontario n'est pas une province unilingue ; c'est une province, à mon avis, qui reconnaît qu'il y a des francophones, des anglophones et d'autres personnes dans cette province, et qu'on a besoin d'avoir les droits, les mécanismes et les institutions nécessaires pour s'y épanouir.

C'est avec cette idée que notre caucus a présentement la Loi 17, introduit juste dernièrement, il y a à peine trois semaines sous mon nom, qui dit simplement que n'importe quel service qui est transféré de la province aux municipalités doit être respecté sous la Loi 8. Je pense qu'il serait un recul désastreux si le gouvernement va en avant en transférant tous les services qui sont maintenant la responsabilité de la province, qu'on les dévolue aux municipalités, et qu'on ne donne pas aux francophones les protections sous la Loi 8. On commence à descendre une côte qui, à la fin de la journée, va être très méchante pour la communauté francophone.

C'est pour cette raison que notre caucus a mis en avant la Loi 17, et on dit au gouvernement que n'importe quel service transféré de la province aux municipalités doit être respecté sous la Loi 8. Si on ne le fait pas, si on ne donne pas ces garanties, à mon avis, c'est quelque chose qui n'est pas acceptable et quelque chose que notre caucus ne pourra pas accepter.

Je veux aussi dire que, quand ça vient à l'amendement de la constitution, quand on arrive à ce chemin — il faut réaliser aujourd'hui qu'on n'est pas là. C'est seulement un document qui essaie de donner des principes, notre vision de ce pays — on doit à ce point là regarder pour la communauté francophone ce qu'on a besoin de faire de concret comme amendements à la constitution qui donneraient aux francophones de la province les garanties dont ils ont besoin pour s'épanouir. Sur ce point, je peux vous garantir que notre caucus, le caucus NPD, avec notre chef M. Hampton et autres, va s'assurer que ces garanties seront données quand le temps vient. C'est pour ça que je veux prendre cette chance de parler pour un couple de minutes et donner ces assurances.

Que l'on aille en avant aujourd'hui avec ce document. Ce document n'est pas un amendement constitutionnel. C'est seulement une déclaration qui dit : «On veut que le Québec demeure dans le Canada. Le Québec est important pour nous tous dans le Canada, et ensemble on doit continuer à bâtir ce pays qu'on appelle le Canada, qu'on tient très proche à notre cœur.»

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Further debate?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Notwithstanding the agreement of the House of earlier today, I seek unanimous consent as follows: that if a recorded division is required, the Speaker shall recess the House until 9:25 pm and cause the bells to ring at that time.

The Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Harris has moved government notice of motion 10. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House is in recess until 9:25. The bells will be rung at 9:25, and it's a five-minute bell.

The House recessed from 2105 to 2125.

The Speaker: Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2125 to 2130.

The Speaker: All those in favour please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
Amott, Ted
Bartolucci, Rick
Bassett, Isabel
Bisson, Gilles
Boushy, Dave
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Caplan, David
Carr, Gary
Castrilli, Annamaria
Christopherson, David
Chudleigh, Ted
Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.
Colle, Mike
Conway, Sean G.
Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
Cunningham, Dianne
Danford, Harry
DeFaria, Carl
Doyle, Ed
Duncan, Dwight
Elliott, Brenda
Fisher, Barbara
Ford, Douglas B.
Gerretsen, John
Grandmaître, Bernard
Gravelle, Michael

Guzzo, Garry J.
Hampton, Howard
Hardeman, Ernie
Harnick, Charles
Harris, Michael D.
Hastings, John
Hodgson, Chris
Hoy, Pat
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Jordan, W. Leo
Kells, Morley
Kennedy, Gerard
Klees, Frank
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Lankin, Frances
Leach, Al
Lessard, Wayne
Marland, Margaret
Martel, Shelley
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
McGuinty, Dalton
McLean, Allan K.
McLeod, Lyn
McLash, Frank
Morin, Gilles E.
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Palladini, Al
Patten, Richard
Phillips, Gerry
Pouliot, Gilles
Preston, Peter
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Runciman, Robert W.
Ruprecht, Tony
Sampson, Rob
Saunders, William
Shea, Derwyn
Sheehan, Frank
Silipo, Tony
Skarica, Toni
Smith, Bruce
Sterling, Norman W.
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tilson, David
Turnbull, David
Vankoughnet, Bill
Villeneuve, Noble
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wildman, Bud
Wilson, Jim
Wood, Bob
Wood, Len
Young, Terence H.

The Speaker: All those opposed please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Cullen, Alex

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): The ayes are 89; the nays are 1.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It now being past 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2134.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Seniors Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (Affaires des personnes âgées)	Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cornwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Don Mills	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Durham Centre / -Centre	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Labour, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / ministre du Travail, solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Durham East / -Est	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Durham West / -Ouest	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Durham-York	Munro, Julia (PC)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Eglinton	Saunderson, William (PC)	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	London South / -Sud	Wood, Bob (PC)
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Middlesex	Smith, Bruce (PC)
Etobicoke-Humber	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
		Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)
		Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Niagara South / -Sud Nipissing	Hudak, Tim (PC) Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Sarnia Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie Scarborough-Agincourt Scarborough Centre / -Centre Scarborough East / -Est Scarborough-Ellesmere Scarborough North / -Nord Scarborough West / -Ouest Simcoe Centre / -Centre Simcoe East / -Est Simcoe West / -Ouest	Boushy, Dave (PC) Martin, Tony (ND) Phillips, Gerry (L) Newman, Dan (PC) Gilchrist, Steve (PC) Mushinski, Marilyn (PC) Curling, Alvin (L) Brown, Jim (PC) Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) McLean, Allan K. (PC) Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Norfolk Northumberland Oakville South / -Sud Oakwood Orlone Oshawa Ottawa Centre / -Centre Ottawa East / -Est Ottawa-Rideau Ottawa South / -Sud	Barrett, Toby (PC) Galt, Doug (PC) Carr, Gary (PC) Colle, Mike (L) Caplan, David (L) Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) Patten, Richard (L) Grandmaître, Bernard (L) Guzzo, Gary J. (PC) McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Sudbury Sudbury East / -Est Timiskaming Victoria-Haliburton	Bartolucci, Rick (L) Martel, Shelley (ND) Ramsay, David (L) Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, président du Conseil de gestion
Ottawa West / -Ouest Oxford Parkdale Parry Sound	Cullen, Alex (L) Hardeman, Ernie (PC) Ruprecht, Tony (L) Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Waterloo North / -Nord	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Perth Peterborough Port Arthur Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud Quinte Rainy River	Johnson, Bert (PC) Stewart, R. Gary (PC) Gravelle, Michael (L) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L) Fox, Gary (PC) Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC) Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique Conway, Sean G. (L) Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Welland-Thorold Wellington Wentworth East / -Est Wentworth North / -Nord Willowdale	Kormos, Peter (ND) Arnott, Ted (PC) Doyle, Ed (PC) Skarica, Toni (PC) Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Renfrew North / -Nord Riverdale S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Wilson Heights Windsor-Riverside Windsor-Sandwich Windsor-Walkerville York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L) Lessard, Wayne (ND) Pupatello, Sandra (L) Duncan, Dwight (L) Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York East / -Est York Mills	Parker, John L. (PC) Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
St Catharines St Catharines-Brock St George-St David	Bradley, James J. (L) Froese, Tom (PC) Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	York-Mackenzie Yorkview York South / -Sud	Klees, Frank (PC) Sergio, Mario (L) Kennedy, Gerard (L)
		Nickel Belt	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Second Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 27 May 1998

Mercredi 27 mai 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 27 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 27 mai 1998

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHILD PROSTITUTION

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Tomorrow this Legislature will debate Bill Pr18, my private member's bill entitled the Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act.

Tomorrow this House will have an opportunity to support the principles outlined at the International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth, entitled Out from the Shadows, when they declared:

"That all children and youth have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse, exploitation and the threat of abuse, harm or exploitation; and

"That the issue of child and youth sexual exploitation and abuse through prostitution must be a global priority. Nations and governments must not only hold their neighbours accountable, but must also be accountable themselves."

These children need all the help they can get. People across this province, be they in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Toronto, London or Windsor, be they from a small community or a large city, need to know that children are being sexually exploited right now. If they keep thinking, "It's not in my city, not in my town," they are sadly mistaken and will be sadly surprised to find out that children in their very own community are being sexually exploited and abused through prostitution.

Provincial laws should reflect, as this act does, the belief that sexual exploitation of children and youth is abuse. We, as members, must take the responsibility of ensuring that this exploitation does not take place.

I look forward to everyone's support.

ANTI-RACISM DAY

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): In the House today I will be tabling a resolution urging the government of Ontario to take steps to ensure that April 4, the anniversary date of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr, be observed in Ontario as Anti-Racism Day. I believe we should be taking this action to commemorate the assassination and to recognize that it occurred as a result of growing hatred and racism almost 30 years ago. I believe

we should be remembering Dr King's death as we continue to struggle against racism that still exists in our society.

In Dr King's last days, which included leading a demonstration in Memphis on March 28, 1968, in support of striking sanitation workers, one demonstrator was killed and more than 50 people were injured. Dr King left Memphis distressed over this violence. He returned on April 3 in the hope of leading a peaceful march. One day before his death, he told the crowd at the Memphis Masonic Temple, "I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the promised land."

Let us each work on Dr King's dream of getting to the promised land, a land that shows zero tolerance towards racism and a community that does not shirk from its responsibility to actively pursue anti-racism.

CANCER PREVENTION

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I rise this afternoon to recognize the Search for a Cure campaign, which is undertaking an ambitious bicycle journey across Canada to raise funds for cancer research.

The leadership and vision for this campaign comes from Stephen Faudemer of Newmarket, Ontario, who lost his father, grandmother and an aunt to cancer. He will ride his bicycle from St John's, Newfoundland, beginning June 1 and finishing in Victoria, BC, on September 29.

Throughout this courageous undertaking, Stephen will be asking all Canadians to pledge in the Search to reach the campaign of \$100,000. One hundred per cent of all funds raised will be distributed to programs for cancer education and prevention, clinical trials in local hospitals, patient services and children's camps such as Camp Trillium and Rainbow Lake.

To lead the Search for a Cure Mr Faudemer has been granted an unpaid leave of absence from his position with the town of Georgina, which is one of the sponsors of the Search. This undertaking demonstrates the true humanitarian nature of Mr Faudemer and his entire campaign team. They represent the best of Ontario.

As they leave the province today and begin the final preparations for this endeavour, I ask my colleagues in the House to join with me in extending our best wishes for success and clear skies, along with our thanks to Stephen, who is here today with his mother and his aunt and his entire campaign team. Please join in welcoming and thanking them.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I rise today to make a statement on behalf of hospital-affected communities all around the province. A hospital shutdown happens to be in my riding. The people of York South are badly affected by the shutdown of Northwestern Hospital and the merger of the hospitals in that area engineered by this government.

It isn't in the headlines every day, but what happened in that shutdown was that in four months the hospital was taken away from the community. That was done because the merger was engineered in such a way as to remove any community vote. No community members can vote any more in the hospital corporation. Because of the provincial government's premature and reckless plans with hospital adjustments, 80% of the people who used to go to that emergency now have to go to another region altogether.

On January 30, senior citizens, about 45 in number, occupied that hospital for nine hours to make the point that they're not going to let the Harris government get away with this. Even though an emergency report came out and said that the hospitals in this area have the worst emergency care in the province, no one is giving up. Instead they are saying very clearly to this government, "We will not have discount health care in northwest Toronto."

While it may be the first hospital to be shut down, it certainly won't be one that the Harris government will get away with. The citizens of York South deserve credit for standing up to the Harris government's agenda of getting rid of quality care, of trying to put something over the citizens of this province. When hospitals shut down and care is taken away, this government is the one that's going to get the discount —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Statements?

1340

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Starting tomorrow and for the next two days, the Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addiction Programs will be holding their 12th annual conference. This is a group of community agencies dedicated to serving those who experience addictions or mental health problems. They are deeply concerned about the multiplicity of program changes, policy decisions and funding decisions this government has made that are impacting on their ability to serve the community that they are mandated to serve.

Two per cent of Ontarians, 200,000 people, will have serious mental illnesses at some point in our lifetime, and 9.2% of adult Canadians self-identify as having problems with their drinking. Yet we saw in the budget that this government brought forward, despite all the talk about transfers to the community of treatments, no mention of funding transfers, even though the government is closing the psychiatric hospitals, is bringing people back into the

community and has the recommendation of investing those dollars.

The housing issues for those who have these problems, the social assistance issues particularly, given Bill 142, and all of the needs that are there in our community remain unserved.

ELMVALE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): Two weeks ago I introduced my private member's bill, An Act to make Parents Responsible for the Wrongful Acts of their Children. While this bill is aimed at those few youths who break laws, today I honour the many more youths who accept social responsibility and contribute to their community.

Focusing on this, I draw your attention to a school of 475 students in Simcoe East, who for the past 19 years have annually given one day from their life back to their community. Today the students of Elmvale District High School are teaming up to paint, rake yards, wash windows, hoe gardens, babysit, wash cars and even count inventory for the people of Elmvale.

Peer Helpers is an accredited study course taught by Graham Shaw. Those signed up for Shaw's course assist their peers and teachers and help as volunteer leaders for younger students. The Elmvale high school Peer Helpers course is moulding future volunteers and is responsible for the leaders we'll have tomorrow.

As members of this provincial Legislature, we owe a "thank you" to those industrious students who have taken their school letters, EDHS, and converted them into the slogan "Elmvale Deserves Help from Students." I am proud of this school, their teachers and especially students like Edward Holley. I expect one day we'll proudly share a seat in this Legislature with a former student from Elmvale.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): When Dalton McGuinty and members of the Ontario Liberal caucus fought the passage of Bill 160, apologists for the Harris government said that the bill's opponents were being alarmist, that the consequences predicted by the Liberal leader and his caucus colleagues would never be seen.

In the Niagara Peninsula, it is obvious that schools will close and teaching positions will be eliminated, just as Dalton McGuinty and Liberal education critic Lyn McLeod predicted. Radical changes to our education system are being forced upon the province with reckless abandon and without taking into account the adverse impact upon the students in that system. The district school board of Niagara sent out layoff notices to 152 secondary school teachers this week and has designated 35 schools for possible closure. When schools reopen in September, it is likely that schools left open will have 150 to 200 fewer teachers.

What Bill 160 was really about was snatching control of education decisions from locally elected trustees and centralizing the decision-making in the offices of the Harris government, cutting hundreds of millions of dollars from education programs in Ontario and eliminating thousands of teaching positions from schools throughout the province.

As Niagara trustee Helen Hall put it, "This certainly will touch kids in the classroom." Trustee Don Brockwell observed, "Our system is going backwards." Trustee Dalton Clark said, "This cutback will have a real impact in terms of introducing new curriculum."

Members of the Liberal caucus will continue to fight against any reckless policies which will have a detrimental effect on our education system —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Statements?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I rise today to report back to the House on a meeting I had at the Collingwood Collegiate Institute last evening, an absolutely marvellous example of schools in our province with a history of excellence in the care and teaching of students. I met with members of the community, and this was hosted by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

The concerns raised through the discussion reflected very clearly the same issues raised at meetings that I attended last week in Elliot Lake, Espanola and my own community of Sault Ste Marie. People are anxious about what they see happening around them and to them. They see people losing their jobs, being pink-slipped or pushed into short-term contract situations with no future. Of even more concern is that there is no plan, there is no blueprint. For example, teachers dedicated to their work and to their students have no idea what they will be doing come September of this year.

This should speak to every member of this Legislature and to every person out there in Ontario. If teachers and others like them have no idea what they are going to be doing two or three months down the road — and these are people who naturally like to be organized, have a tremendous commitment to the work they do, love the students they teach, care for the communities in which they live — if they're not being given the information and the resources necessary to do that job by this government, we all lose.

WENDY WRIGHT

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): I rise in the House today to congratulate Wendy Wright of Stouffville District Secondary School, who is the proud recipient of the 1998 Daimler-Benz Award of Excellence. Stouffville District Secondary School in my riding of Durham-York is one of 50 grand prize winners of this most prestigious award.

Now in its seventh year, the Daimler-Benz Award of Excellence is a global awareness-raising program sponsored by Daimler-Benz and the Goethe Institute. It was

conceived to promote understanding and friendship between young people in North America and Germany.

The 391 students who participated from Stouffville faced stiff competition this year, as over 213,000 students entered from over 2,000 schools throughout the United States and Canada.

Wendy, chosen by the school committee as their most distinguished student, will join a group of young Americans and Canadians on a three-week, all-expense-paid tour to Washington, DC, and Germany. Wendy is now one of close to 1.5 million young North Americans who have participated in the program since its inception.

Today's announcement is significant because only one other school in Ontario was chosen as a grand prize winner, and only five were chosen throughout all of Canada.

Wendy Wright, ambassador for Stouffville and the community, I want to again extend congratulations and best wishes from the community and the province of Ontario.

MEMBER'S PRIVILEGE

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I want to correct the record.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Let's make it a point of order, because I didn't get any notice.

Mr Wildman: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate it.

On page 726 of the printed version of the official record of debate for Tuesday, May 26, 1998, I'm quoted in the statement I made in tribute to Ted Jolliffe incorrectly, and I wanted to correct the record. In the written version it states:

"He soon became the provincial leader in 1942, a position he held until 1953. In 1953, Ted Jolliffe led the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation to within five seats of forming a government here at Queen's Park."

Obviously, Speaker, that's incorrect. It should be:

"In 1943, Ted Jolliffe led the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation to within five seats of forming a government..."

The Speaker: Amended.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT,
(COMMUNITY SAFETY ZONES), 1998**

**LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ZONES
DE SÉCURITÉ COMMUNAUTAIRES**

Mr Flaherty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 26, An Act to promote public safety through the creation of community safety zones / Projet de loi 26, Loi

visant à favoriser la sécurité publique par la création de zones de sécurité communautaires.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

A short comment, Minister?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): This bill, if passed, would amend certain parts of the Highway Traffic Act to allow the designation of portions of roads as community safety zones to better protect community and children's safety. The bill would also double fines for moving offences committed in a community safety zone. The intent of this bill is to protect the safety of our communities and our children. I urge all members to support it.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ROAD SAFETY

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): A few moments ago, I introduced a bill that would, if passed, significantly improve the safety of our communities and particularly of our children. This is of paramount importance to the government of Ontario.

The bill would amend the Highway Traffic Act to enable municipalities to establish community safety zones and double the fine payable for committing certain offences within these zones. We intend to extend extra protection to areas such as school zones and crossings, school bus stops, day care centres and children's parks.

These amendments to the Highway Traffic Act would give municipalities the power to establish special community safety zones, particularly around schools, where fines for many driving infractions will be doubled. Prominent roadside signs will let drivers know when they are entering and leaving the special zones.

The amendments would also allow the government to designate parts of the King's highways as community safety zones. King's highways are those Ontario highways patrolled by the Ontario Provincial Police and maintained by the Ministry of Transportation. What we have on these highways are too many irresponsible drivers who are just not getting the message that unsafe and aggressive driving is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. I believe this new initiative will help to drive that message home.

The responsibility of identifying and designating community safety zones will rest with participating municipalities. Municipal councils have the authority to pass bylaws and initiate measures to ensure the health and safety of residents.

The community safety zones initiative would provide municipalities with another tool to help make communities safer, especially for children. This measure, following as it

does the \$150-million commitment to community safety initiatives announced in this year's Ontario budget, shows that this government is determined to maintain our position of leadership in protecting the people of Ontario.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I would say to the minister that I can't imagine any person in this Legislature today, especially those of us who are parents, who would disagree with this initiative. But I think as parents what we would have to question you on is why you have bothered to open up such a large act as the Highway Traffic Act for such a narrow application of safety measures when we all know there are many more that need to be applied to the protection of our children and adults in Ontario society right across this province.

Minister, members in our caucus have talked to you over time and given you positive suggestions in terms of what more you could do to protect the citizens of Ontario. While this announcement is certainly welcome — obviously, we want to afford more protection to our children in those areas they frequent most often — it is important while you're doing this to be open to other suggestions and to afford more protection to our children in other parts of the province, and adults.

One of those ideas would first of all be, when you look at this, to ensure that our police forces, both municipal and provincial, have the adequate funding for enforcement. It's fine to double the fines, but if the police departments don't have the wherewithal and the tools to bring on the enforcement, regardless of whatever the fines are, they are going to have no effect on safety. It's going to be very important, in this time of trying to do more with less, which seems to be the philosophy of your government, that when it comes to public safety and security we have adequate funding in these areas.

We have talked to you about other issues. One of those is the red light issue here in Toronto. At high-speed, high-collision intersections in Toronto, we know we have a chronic problem now with people running those lights. Many municipalities have come to you asking you to authorize the use of high-speed cameras at those high-collision intersections. That is something we support. We think it's very important that our cities and towns, where they have such a problem, have access to those tools in order to protect our citizens.

It is absolutely necessary that every motorist and every pedestrian is certain that, once they start to cross an intersection, there is no traffic going the other way. Unfortunately, our present system has failed. We no longer have that certainty. So it's extremely important that you allow our police departments to utilize modern, low-cost tools that will ensure that we have safe intersections in the city.

The other issue, which I talked to you about a few weeks ago, is high-speed police chases. This is an issue that is front and centre before people, especially in our residential neighbourhoods in some of our larger cities. We have had nine deaths over the last few years from high-speed police chases, and it is very important, as I

asked you a few weeks ago in this House, to look again at these criteria.

In the last example we had, a 73-year-old man was killed while riding his bicycle on the sidewalk in his neighbourhood here in Toronto. He was killed through a high-speed police pursuit of young offenders in a van who were being pursued because of suspicion of shoplifting.

I think we really have to start to look at the criteria of what begins a high-speed chase and how we continue, if we do at all, a high-speed chase, especially when it comes to residential neighbourhoods. This is something I implore you to look at as soon as possible before we have another fatality here in Ontario.

I would like to share my time with the member for Essex-Kent, because there's another issue you could have addressed here that he brought up in a private member's bill which I think should have been here this afternoon.

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): Minister, we welcome your remarks today about opening the Highway Traffic Act, but I offered to the government, under my private member's bill, Bill 78, an opportunity to introduce vehicle liability which would have enhanced the protection of the 810,000 children who ride school buses daily from those drivers who fail to stop when the red lights are flashing on school buses.

You talk about safety zones. By bringing in Bill 78 and initiatives for vehicle liability, you could create 16,000 safety zones, that being those 16,000 buses that operate daily in Ontario, going twice a day, sometimes three times, through their route.

Do it in memory of Ryan Marcuzzi, a young student from Essex who was killed when a driver passed a bus. This continues to happen. There have been press stories continuing even this year where people are neglecting their duty to stop —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Responses; third party.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I can indicate to the Solicitor General that I have no doubt that all three parties are going to support this legislation. That's what it was designed for. It was designed to be so politically sanitary that nobody could contradict the proposition. But the fact is that at the end of the day, it remains incredibly hollow, purely political and, quite frankly, when you look at what this government has failed to do with respect to community safety, cynical and downright stupid.

The bottom line remains that if you don't have cops out there on the street identifying and apprehending these drivers that the Solicitor General is talking about, you can set up all the comfort safety zones you want — you can set them up around day cares, schools, at crosswalks, around seniors' centres, wherever you want to, but the bottom line is that police forces across this province are seriously understaffed.

I'll speak directly about the Niagara Regional Police Force, which is down anywhere from 80 to 100 members of what should be its appropriate complement. We've experienced in Niagara region — and we're not unique; this is common among communities across this province

— incredible delay times in response to serious incidents, incidents of break and enter, assault, robbery, what have you. We've experienced the crisis level of having shifts where there are pathetically few cruisers and police officers on duty and out there on patrol.

1400

This government was warned in no uncertain terms during its manipulation of the Police Services Act about what it was doing to police forces in this province, that it was forcing police forces into the mode of revenue-raising. I suspect this Solicitor General isn't aware, but I'm going to make him aware today, of what police forces across this province have been forced to do. It's called option 4, Solicitor General. Let me tell you how it works.

Because police forces are under-resourced, they've had to dedicate on any number of days, any number of weeks, as much as three and four and five officers on a given shift to set up radar traps, and inevitably they're set up where you have a transition in the speed limit, from 60 to 80 or from 80 to 60. Police officers write out provincial offence notices, as is proper, because they catch a huge number of speeders in these zones.

These offenders are advised, of course, of options 1, 2 and 3 on a provincial offence notice. You're aware of those, Solicitor General — I'm sure you are — of options 1, 2 and 3, but you've created a new option. You've created an option 4. "Option 4?" you say. "My God, that couldn't be true." Well, option 4 is a little notice you get with your provincial offence notice, your speeding ticket, that says that if you attend at the local police station within 48 hours with the ticket and pay \$55 cash, exact change, payable to the local police services board, the ticket will be torn up. Of course there's a skill-testing question. It's like when you win the free coffee over at Tim Hortons and they ask you to multiply 4 by 17 — the former Minister of Education has never won that cup of coffee, but I suspect you would. That is but a guise to prevent this from being seen as what it really is.

I tell you, this is happening across the province. You've put police forces across the province in the position of mere revenue-raising. I was advised by one staff sergeant that in one afternoon one municipal police force was able to raise \$2,200 for its own coffers as a result of option 4. They don't like doing it and they know it's not an effective deployment of scarce police resources, but you've forced them to do it because you're insistent on police forces being understaffed across this province.

You have betrayed communities and you've betrayed the principle of community safety and community security by abandoning police forces across Ontario, the Niagara region and other municipalities included. Your government wants to talk a big game about safety zones, yet you've steadfastly refused to acquiesce in consistent and persistent community requests to use photo-radar-type machines at intersections, for instance, which could and would detect drivers going through red lights and stop signs. You've said, "No, this won't work," when you won't have police officers out there on the street enforcing it. You know it, and if you don't, you ought to know it. If

you didn't know it, you should be ashamed of yourself, and if you do know it, you're a party to the crimes that are being perpetrated and that remain undetected and unenforced in every municipality in this province.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to know if it's parliamentary for the member for Welland-Thorold to accuse the minister of being party to a crime, which is what he just said.

The Speaker: I don't think the member was suggesting he was part of an actual crime. I think it was just terminology.

Hon Mrs Marland: So you are defending it.

The Speaker: I'm defending it? No, I'm ruling on it. I'm not defending anything. If there was a crime taking place and there was an accusation, there may have been some point of order.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg leave to inform the House that today the Clerk received the first report of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 105(g)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Minister of Finance, but pending his arrival, I have another question for the Chair of Management Board.

I want to return to the issue that was raised in this House yesterday regarding the Niagara Falls casino. Minister, let's start with what we do know. We know that the object of the game here was to develop the tourism potential of Niagara Falls. The mayor told my office earlier today that they don't want to be known as a casino city; they want to be known as a world-class tourism destination.

The second thing we know is that you asked an expert tourism panel to rate the various proposals that were put forward.

The next thing we know is that the winning bid did not finish first in that competition. In fact, it didn't even finish second. It finished third.

Minister, can you tell us today why it is that when the reason for doing this was supposed to be about increasing tourism, the bid that was supposed to win in fact did not?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): The Leader of the Opposition is wrong. What I'm told is that there was a selection committee that made the evaluation, and it was reviewed by a review

team. The selection committee judged each proposal based on its merit, and it was their job to determine which proposal best met the criteria identified for the request for proposals.

The selection committee asked outside experts in various fields, based on the various criteria, to give opinions on the feasibility of it. There was no ranking done by these outside experts. I know he's alleging a lot of things here, but what I'm told is that the selection committee made that evaluation itself, and the selection of the proponent that is now in negotiations, if those negotiations do not work out, then they go down to the next highest ranked proposal.

Mr McGuinty: We are told by the mayor that there is an expert panel that rated the proposals, that the object of the game here was to bring about real improvement to the tourism potential of Niagara Falls. One of those bids ended up winning; one of those proposals was rated first. But the proposal that was rated first by this expert panel did not win the bid. That's the issue here.

What we do know — and let me tell you what the mayor of Niagara Falls said. He said he's tired of the province treating council like a mushroom, keeping them in the dark and, I quote, "having some manure poured on our head." They feel they're not getting answers to the kinds of questions that I'm putting in this House to you today. The best proposal didn't win. The second-best proposal didn't win. It turns out that the winner was a company with significant ties to your party.

Why not, given these kinds of questions that you haven't answered, agree to conducting a legislative inquiry so we can get to the bottom of this?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I met with Mayor Thomson a couple of weeks ago, and we had a positive discussion. He said he had some concerns about not being informed of all the details of the proposal, and he understood the reason why there was confidentiality, that this was a competitive process. If the first bidder doesn't work out, you go with the second. You can't have your offer shopped in public.

But if you listen to your own question or if you read your own question, the mayor is left in the dark at the end of your question. He doesn't know what's going on. At the start of your question, you preface it all by saying, "The mayor tells us you didn't pick the best proponent." The mayor tells you, by your own question, that he wasn't involved in that process of the selection committee. So why do you continue to give these false allegations? Why don't you make them outside the House? In here you've got total immunity.

Mr McGuinty: Let's review the facts with respect to the connection to the Conservative Party.

The Latner family, which is a family with strong ties to your party, a family that has given your party over \$40,000 during the last two years, stands to benefit because of the winning bid.

Who made the decision with respect to the winning bid? David Nash. David Nash is a long-time Tory fundraiser and party activist whom you appointed to chair the casino selection process.

Who did the Latner family hire as their lobbyist? George Boddington, a member of the Bradgate group — that's Mike Harris's political strategy group.

Who acted as the lawyer in all of this? David McFadden, former Tory MPP and PC Party president.

Given the ties, once again, to your party, given that the winning proposal did not finish first — it finished third — will you open up the process and will you agree to have a legislative inquiry?

1410

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I mentioned to the NDP who asked this question twice, and these allegations were printed in the Toronto Star on the weekend, David Nash, chair of the Ontario Casino Corp, headed it up. He went through the agencies, boards and commissions process of this Legislature. Your own party voted for him because you felt, I'm assuming, that he would do a great job, be impartial. The selection committee was set up and there was a review team. The selection committee judged all the proponents based on the RFP and chose the best one to do that, and now what's happening is you're in negotiations with the number-one-ranked proponent. If that doesn't work out, you go to number two.

The same process has been used by former governments when they set up these casinos, and in the words of the president of the Ontario Casino Corp, Brian Wood, "Falls Management Co was selected because in the opinion of the selection committee, it had the highest-quality bid." Those are the facts that I have to deal with. If you want to deal with the innuendo and the mud-raking, make the allegation outside and be accountable for it.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: I will stand it down for the Minister of Finance.

The Speaker: New question, third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Since we're on the issue of the Falls Management consortium and their bid to build and operate the Niagara casino —

The Speaker: Who is the question to?

Mr Hampton: To the Chair of Management Board. I want to ask the Chair of Management Board this again. We understand that Michael French was part of a group of Conservative insiders who advised the Premier on how to go about bringing more gambling to Ontario, but after having advised the Premier on how to bring more gambling to Ontario, he then stepped into the position of making some of the major decisions as to who was going to run the casinos. For example, when we asked people in your government, "How did a bid that has the Latner family name written all over it, how did they get bumped up from third place to first place and get the Niagara casino?" we were told, "Michael French made that decision."

This smacks of political payola and it smacks of conflict of interest. Will you open the books so that people can see what's really happening?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The facts that I'm told aren't the same ones that you allege happened. What I am told happened is that the selection committee picked the best

proponent based on the criteria that were outlined in the RFP. This French person you mention, I don't know him and I don't know if the Premier knows him, but I can tell you that the selection committee asked all kinds of expert panels to give advice on various components of the selection criteria, and the criteria were the concept, the financial plans, the business plans, management expertise and the tourism component. That's a major issue this government wants to see happen in Niagara Falls, more tourism. We're for more economic activity in the province, unlike your government that created a mess and lost 10,000 net new jobs in this province.

Mr Hampton: Just about everything the Chair of Management Board has said is discredited by everyone out there. People in Niagara Falls know that there is no convention centre of any substance attached to the Latner family's bid for this casino. They know that in terms of the tourism component it is completely inadequate. They know that this was a third-ranked bid, and because of political interference by Conservative insiders, it was bumped up to number one so the Latner family would get their return.

Minister, consider that, but also consider the Latner family had the inside track on one of the permanent casinos. The Latner family are going to benefit from your changes to medical lab regulations. Doesn't it strike you as a bit absurd that wherever you turn in terms of your government's awarding of contracts or awarding of benefits, the Latner family is there?

I want to add one more point to this. The Latner family, we understand, is a huge landlord. They're going to benefit from your changes to rent control. Don't you think you should at least look at —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I guess in here you can make all the allegations you want. As the government, and being responsible, we have to deal with the facts, and the facts are that a selection committee was set up under a similar process to what you had when you were in government when you did other proposals similar to this. They had criteria that their request for proposals was based on and they evaluated them. Then there was a review team that looked at that to make sure it was fair and transparent.

Your allegations about individuals I invite you to make outside the chamber. You know full well in here you're totally immune from any allegations or any spurious comments you want to throw, so make it outside.

The Speaker: Final supplementary, the member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): You know full well that Falls Management came third by the assessment of the panel of experts when it came to tourism. The Fallsview proposal came number one, yet Fallsview fell by the wayside. They didn't have the connections. They didn't have the inside track. They didn't have the players who clearly had some direct contacts.

How is it you can dismiss so readily the Fallsview group, rating number one when it comes to tourism, being

bypassed, falling by the wayside, in favour of your political buddies in Falls Management winning a highly lucrative bid which also involves the complete abandonment of any tourism component to the casino development in Niagara Falls? Justify it.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I can tell you the facts on this matter. The process is set up at arm's length from politicians, so no matter what you want to say - I don't know if you're suggesting that politicians choose the bidders or not — I can tell you, in the words of Brian Wood, who is the president of the Ontario Casino Corp, that "Falls Management Co was selected because, in the opinion of the selection committee, it had the highest quality" bid. Your allegation that it was third, not first, is wrong, and I don't know why you keep repeating that.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question to the Minister of Health and it concerns people who are sick and who are not able to access the care they need, or if they are able to access the care they need, have to pay for it out of their own pocket.

In this particular case, it's Lise Pilon from Timmins who had surgery here in Toronto and then was sent home to Timmins three days later. She was sent home so quickly that she developed an infection in the incision. The infection was so serious that her physician said to her, "You have to have intravenous antibiotics every 12 hours and I'm going to send you to the Timmins and District Hospital to receive this in the emergency ward." When she went to emergency at the hospital they said: "No, you shouldn't be here. This is not an appropriate use of the emergency ward," and they tried to dissuade her from coming to the emergency ward to get that health care.

Minister, what is someone like Lise Pilon supposed to do when she goes to the emergency room, they try to persuade her not to come there —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I think the leader of the third party certainly does know any decisions that are made in emergency rooms in any of the hospitals throughout Ontario are clinical decisions that are made by the individuals who obviously have the expertise to make those decisions.

Mr Hampton: The minister is trying to confuse the issue. They tried to persuade her not to come to emergency. They didn't say, "We're not going to give you treatment." They said: "Please don't come here. It costs the health care system about \$150 every time you come here." I understand why staff at the Timmins general hospital might do that. Their budget has been cut by \$3 million by your government and they're trying to find ways to save money.

The interesting thing is that after trying to persuade her not to come to emergency they said, "Go to the community care access centre and get home care." We called the community care access centre and we asked them about

home care. This is what they said, Minister, and you ought to hear this: "Miss Pilon cannot get home care here. We are so short of money, our budget has been cut so severely by the Harris government that we can only afford to deal with the elderly and the shut-ins. We can't help Miss Pilon." What is Lise Pilon supposed to do, Minister? She can't get the health care she needs.

1420

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think it's important to remember that our government has actually made an investment of \$225 million into the emergency rooms. However, if you were to give me all of the information, I would be happy to follow up on that particular situation.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): The situation is outrageous. Your government is saying, "Patients come last." The patient is being forced to pay \$200 per month for treatment and no one is responsible for her care. Minister, you have created confusion, a lack of coordination and reduced health care resources in my community. Furthermore, my constituent does not only suffer; she is being held responsible.

Minister, we've given you example after example of new user fees that your government has created. Are you going to tell Lise Pilon there are no new user fees in our health care system, and are you going to reimburse her and everyone else in the Cochrane district who comes to services for the CCAC who can't get them because you cut their budgets?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think it's extremely important that we at least put some of the facts on the record. The reality is that the funding for all the CCACs has increased. In fact, as you know, our government made an announcement several weeks ago that we were investing into the long-term-care areas, we were investing into the community care services. We've announced that we are going to be improving the amount of money available by \$551 million.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I don't agree with her, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Cochrane North, come to order. I'm not going to warn you again, member for Cochrane North. Member for Sault Ste Marie.

Hon Mrs Witmer: If we could get all the facts — and I hope we have the accurate facts, as you're giving them to us, because in some occasions I found that some of the information being presented is not always accurate in here — we would be happy to follow up.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): In the absence of the Minister of Finance, I'll direct my question to the Chair of Management Board.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): So this is a leader's question, then.

Mr McGuinty: Yes, a leader's question, please.

I want to address the issue of your property tax reform, Minister. The objective was certainly a noble one. You said you were going to make it more simple and fair. So you started off with Bill 106 and you did that on the fly and you were going by the seat of your pants. Then you decided you'd better amend that by introducing Bill 149. Then you figured you'd better amend that by means of Bill 164. Then more recently you decided you'd better amend the whole lot by means of Bill 16, which by the way is twice the size of Bill 106, the original bill.

The Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario called your latest changes "a recipe for chaos and ruin." Municipal people throughout the province are frantically trying to figure out how to make this stuff work. What happened to your promise to make property taxes in Ontario fairer and simpler?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I refer this to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): First of all they talked about that we're rushing a bill through and we haven't had proper consultation. Let me just tell you who was consulted and who was met with when we were preparing and drafting this bill: the Canadian Federation of Independent Business; the board of trade; the tenants' tax coalition; a shoppers' mall; Cadillac Fairview; large industrial General Motors; AMO; the city of Toronto; Hamilton-Wentworth; the county of Lambton; the Ontario Restaurant Association; the hotel association; the business improvement areas association; TransCanada PipeLines; the Urban Development Institute.

We had more consultations in the preparation of the tax reform bill, probably, than any other bill we've ever had. We made sure we had the input from all the major stakeholders so that when we drafted the bill, we ensured that the concerns of all the individuals —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: I'm going to encourage the minister to understand the significance of what took place in this precinct today. The Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario appeared here today and held a press conference. These people are dedicated, hardworking senior bureaucrats for municipalities across this province. Their job is to make provincial policy work. They are saying that this is not workable.

This is the first time, as I understand it, in the history of this province that they have come to Queen's Park and held a press conference. They said that what you have done with respect to property tax legislation in Ontario is a recipe for chaos and ruin. They want to help. They're asking that you permit debate and that you allow a committee to look at some proposals they have for changes to Bill 16.

I'm asking you, Minister, will you allow that to happen? Will we have the opportunity to have intelligent debate on this issue and an opportunity to have debate at committee?

Hon Mr Leach: Again to the Leader of the Opposition, we have received the concerns addressed by the clerks and treasurers. I will be meeting with the clerks and treasurers shortly to discuss their concerns.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: As I said before I was so rudely interrupted, we're aware of the concerns that have been brought forward by the clerks and treasurers, and we can address those concerns. There isn't any doubt about that. As I mentioned, I'll be meeting with them. The bill as drafted will be brought into law once this Legislature approves it and we can address the concerns that have been put forward by this association.

I can tell the House again that while this bill was being drafted we consulted all of the major stakeholders, including the major municipalities, the small municipalities, AMO, the board of trade, General Motors. Everyone that this bill would have an effect on was consulted in the drafting of the bill. It's plain to see that everyone had a chance to have input and their input was listened to.

Mr McGuinty: Bill 16, like the bills before it, is creating a mess in Ontario. We have some expert people here from municipalities across the province who want to lend a hand. They're trying to fix it. It's easy for you to say you're going to rush this thing through and you're not prepared to entertain any notion of having this go into committee. But they have to deal with this. They're on the front lines. They've got to make it work.

They are asking the same thing I'm asking, Minister: Will you not give us the opportunity now to debate this intelligently? You're going to shut this thing down and make this law by the end of the day tomorrow. They're asking for some basic kinds of amendments that will at least in some way make it a little bit more workable. Can you not delay this? If our committee has to sit in the evenings, we're prepared to do that. If our committee has to sit this weekend, we're prepared to do that too. Minister, can we not —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. It would be easier if you just passed notes back and forth instead of heckling, actually.

Mr McGuinty: Again, Minister, on behalf of the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario I am asking, can we not have more time to debate in a serious fashion a very serious issue which to date has struck fear into the hearts of municipalities across this province? You're creating an unworkable, unmanageable situation for them. Can we have more time?

1430

Hon Mr Leach: I appreciate the member suggesting that we meet through the weekend. Perhaps the first meeting can be about 3:30 Saturday morning, but all members would have to be present to take part in the debate.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister?

Hon Mr Leach: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. We know how important this bill is to the clerks and

treasurers of Ontario. It's probably one of the most significant bills outside of the Municipal Act that they have to deal with. We are committing to meet with the clerks and treasurers to ensure that we can alleviate their concerns, address their concerns, and show them what is behind the bill and how it can work, as we're confident it will. They have the draft bill. They've indicated their concerns. We will meet with them and we'll address each one of their concerns as we go.

HOME CARE

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I want to address this question to the Minister of Health on another area where the chaos and mismanagement of this government is finding itself manifest. I want to talk to you about homemaking services. You've made a mess of them around the province, and today we learned that in Toronto specifically there are now 600 home care workers who may be forced to go out on strike.

They don't want to do this. They look after the frail elderly, people recovering from hospital operations, people who can't defend themselves and whose situations can't really be noticed because they're in their own homes.

Six hundred home care workers working for the Visiting Homemakers Association, which has been around for 72 years providing services, have been forced by your rules to turn around to their workers and look for salary and benefit cuts of 20%. They've been negotiating for four months. You should be aware of this, Minister. Vulnerable people could lose services. What are you going to do about it?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): We are well aware of the needs of people in this province. We are the ones, of course, who introduced the CCACs in order that people could have one-stop shopping to these organizations. There are 43 of them throughout the province. These organizations provide homemaking, nursing and therapy.

Recently, as the member knows, we recognized the fact that there was a need for additional money in order to support people with these community services, and our government announced that we were going to be bringing forward an additional amount of \$551 million in order that we can provide the community services that are needed for people in communities throughout Ontario.

Mr Kennedy: We have a minister prepared to talk about these phantom dollars and not prepared to deal with people.

Right now, watching on television, are probably some of the clientele of the Visiting Homemakers Association, people who could lose their services.

It's your government, Minister, that put them at home. You pushed them out of hospital quicker and sicker. It's your government that reduced the number of hours they could get. It's now only an average of 15 hours a week they can get in terms of homemaking that is being given to them. It is your government that created a competition, a fight among home care services, that's driving the quality

of services down, that is forcing wages to be reduced, that will mean less quality care for each person who is sick at home.

Minister, are you prepared to defend the people who are sick and vulnerable in their own homes? Will you speak up for them and will you stop this process of competition which is going to drive the quality and the care out of this home care system?

Hon Mrs Witmer: It is actually our government that introduced the quality and introduced the care into the system, because unfortunately, before these changes were made, people didn't have the opportunity of having access to these services.

I think it's also very important to remember that the 43 CCACs throughout the province have boards, and the boards that support the CCACs are members of local communities. I can assure you that the people who have taken on these responsibilities are very committed individuals, they are doing this voluntarily and they know about the needs of their community. I can assure you that the boards of the CCACs and the staffs of the CCACs throughout the province of Ontario are going to ensure that the necessary essential services will continue to be provided to the people who need them.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question again for the Chair of Management Board. The Chair of Management Board in my last question said, "Step outside and make some of these allegations."

Minister, this is a prospectus and it's put out in part by one of the Latner family companies. In this prospectus they're trying to get money. They're saying, "The apartment units we have are worth something because our good friends in the Ontario government are going to do away with rent control and you'll be able to jack up the rents."

Our allegation here, Minister, and I suggest you take it seriously, is that friends of the Conservative Party are benefiting from your government's decision right, left and centre. The Latner family is part of a casino bid that was bumped up from number three to number one in Niagara, despite the fact it has nothing to recommend it on its merits. The Latner family is going to benefit from one of the permanent charity casinos.

Minister, will you open up the process at least of the Niagara casino to assure the public that the right bid, the best bid, is being selected by you —

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I can tell the leader of the third party that what he is saying is absolutely false. This government is trying to conduct its business in the most ethical and fair manner possible.

I can speak specifically to the file that I've now been given around the casino process. I can tell you that the reason why the bid isn't out there, the reason why the mayor has concerns in Niagara Falls, is the fact that he is not involved in the negotiations. It is the Ontario Casino

Corp. They took the advice from the selection committee, and now they are conducting the negotiations. There is no bid that has been finalized yet, but they're working through the number one proposal according to the selection committee. If that doesn't work out, you go to number two.

What you're asking for is to say, "Lay out the negotiations in public and then let them shop offers." We have an arm's-length committee for this purpose that has selected a proponent, and then the Ontario Casino Corp negotiates with the number one proponent.

Mr Hampton: The Chair of Management Board says that what we're saying is absolutely false. I've got news for you, Minister. The fact that your government changed the health lab regulations so as to benefit a Latner company, Dynacare labs, is absolutely on the public record. All of the small labs who are being taken advantage of now by your government in order to reward your corporate friends know about it.

The fact that the Latner family, through one of their other companies, is getting one of the permanent charity casinos is also on the public record.

Now the fact that the Latner family, through one of their other companies, is advertising far and wide that they're going to benefit from your decontrol of rents is also on the public record. We're asking you: Put the selection of the Niagara casino on the public record. What have you got to fear? What have you got to hide? Open up the process and show the people of Ontario that it's fair.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I know that the lab question, the allegations he said yesterday, were answered by the Minister of Health. He's also fully aware that they were industry-driven, and the Minister of Health gave a full explanation of that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Hon Mr Hodgson: The allegation around the labs that the leader of the third party keeps throwing around so freely was fully answered by the Minister of Health. It was an open and transparent policy that the caps were in place. It's fully done in an appropriate manner.

Municipal affairs: The housing policy was done to benefit tenants and landlords alike right across the province. There were public hearings on that.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I'd just like to sum up by reiterating that if the leader of the third party wants to make these allegations, I invite him to do so outside where he knows that he would be accountable for them. That's not a threat; it's just the facts. I've tried to lay it out the best I can that this government's operating in an open and fair and transparent manner that's accountable to taxpayers.

1440

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I know the member for St Catharines —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I need to know where your question's going.

Mr Parker: I'm going to get to that, Mr Speaker. The member for St Catharines wants the minister —

The Speaker: I need to know where your question's going. You have to tell me where your question's going first.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Chief government whip, if you want to stand up and state a point of order, be my guest. Otherwise, I suggest you not heckle the Speaker.

Mr Parker: I heard some enthusiasm for the Minister of Education —

The Speaker: I am not going to say it one more time. It's not funny. I need to know where your question's going.

Mr Parker: Mr Speaker, the question is going to the Minister of Education. As I know, and you are aware, the member for St Catharines is anxious that he have an opportunity to answer a question today.

My constituents in the riding of York East are seriously concerned about reports that are currently in circulation to the general effect that the Toronto District School Board may have to eliminate school sports programs. They're being told the story that because of the increase in classroom teaching time, teachers won't have time to coach those sports programs. They're hearing also that funding for sports equipment has been cut, in some reports by as much as 100%. What information can I bring back to my constituents to help set the record straight on this issue?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I'd like to thank the member for York East for the question and the opportunity to clarify this matter because I, and this government, consider the extra-curricular activities that go on in our schools to be of utmost importance. Myself, many years ago, I participated in sports such as football and basketball, the science club, that sort of thing, after hours. Those are important for the development of our young students.

I want to say frankly that I'm appalled that the students' programs are being held hostage by the school boards. This is happening at a time when the supplies and text fund has been increased by \$43 million to the school boards across the province of Ontario. In the city of Toronto, where this question is emanating from, they have precisely the same amount of money in their supplies and text fund, plus they have access to hundreds of millions of dollars of other revenue. They only need to find one fifth of 1% of their total budget to fund these programs. The students should have these programs; there's no reason why they shouldn't.

Mr Parker: As I mentioned, there's also the concern that with the increase in hours in the classroom the teachers won't have the time to coach the programs. Where will the teachers find the time to coach these school sports programs?

Hon David Johnson: That's another very good question. I'm again very disgusted that I read in the Toronto

Star that the head of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation has instructed his members not to commit to anything but normal classroom duties. That's abominable, because we have simply asked our teachers in Ontario to increase their classroom time from three and three quarter hours a day, by far the lowest across Canada, to just a little bit under the Canadian average.

We're not asking our teachers to do anything beyond what teachers are doing in other jurisdictions in Canada, beyond what the elementary teachers are doing here in Ontario. There should be no reason why those teachers who are interested in participating should not be able to participate in extracurricular sports. The funding is there. The teachers have the time, as teachers in other jurisdictions do. Our students deserve those programs; they should get them.

GO TRANSIT

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. According to the current managing director of GO Transit, Rich Ducharme, your underfunding of GO Transit is the root cause of the cuts in numerous GO Transit routes coming into Toronto. Today on radio, the well-respected Lou Parsons, the former director and former chairman of APTA, the American Public Transit Association, also agrees that it's your government's abandonment of public transit like GO and the downloading of public transit on to property taxes that has caused this disaster that's about to befall GO Transit with these cutbacks.

Minister, how can you run a railroad that, because of your funding cuts, can't afford now even to stop and pick up passengers? How can you run a railroad that way?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): I know the honourable member was trying very hard to find a way to blame the current situation on us, and that's par for the course, I understand that, but I'd like to inform the honourable member that a decision of this government, the Mike Harris government, in fact guarantees for this fiscal year extra money for GO Transit, for their capital, to the tune of \$106 million. That is the fact. That is what's going on because of our decision.

1450

Mr Colle: There is no jurisdiction in North America, in the western world, that has downloaded public transit to municipal taxpayers. Nowhere in Chicago, New York, California, Germany or Italy does public transit go down to the property taxpayer. You've done that. You're the first government to do that. Because you've done that, you've created a recipe for disaster. You have walked away from that responsibility.

Rather than pointing fingers, I ask you to do the right thing: Step in and do something about the thousands of passengers who are going to be abandoned by your walking away from public transportation, especially GO Transit. Will you step in and help GO Transit serve the people who want to use it?

Hon Mr Clement: I'm not sure what facts the honourable member is referring to, because many public transit systems throughout the world are the responsibility of the municipalities.

Mr Colle: Where? Which one? Name one.

Hon Mr Clement: The Paris Métro that he mentioned, the London Underground.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Oakwood, please come to order.

Hon Mr Clement: There is a reason why all of the great municipal transit systems in the world are run by the municipality. The reason is that the municipality has the ability to deliver better services for less in this particular area. Despite that fact, this province has had a commitment in the past to municipal transit services.

We just gave a cheque to Mel Lastman and to the Toronto city council for \$828 million this year to ensure that their municipal transit system is run the proper way. I am proud of that commitment by this government. I am proud of the fact that we are continuing to ensure that there are strategic funds available for capital needs for GO Transit as well.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I have a question to the Attorney General. Earlier this week I asked the Premier if he would stop stonewalling and call a public inquiry into the shooting death of Dudley George. Of course, he hid behind his usual excuses. It's been over two years, and maybe you people thought it was going to be forgotten, but I tell you, the people of Ontario will not forget Dudley George.

You also know I filed a letter with the clerk of the administration of justice committee. There's going to be an inquiry there. There are going to be witnesses called. With the mere 12 hours allotted, we're going to try to find out what the Premier has been hiding.

Earlier this week I talked about the new evidence showing that the OPP riot squad was ordered to enter Ipperwash. This absolutely contradicts sworn testimony by OPP officers and even the former OPP commissioner. This looks like a coverup, it stinks like a coverup.

Attorney General, your duties transcend partisanship. Will you fulfil those duties by committing today to calling for a full public inquiry into the shooting and death of Dudley George?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The very issues that the member raises in his question are all issues that continue to be before courts, that involve issues pertaining to individuals who I think are entitled to have their cases completed without any prejudice to them. Accordingly, it would be inappropriate to deal with the request at this time.

Mr Kormos: The Attorney General stands and refuses to answer questions or to call an inquiry because, as he would put it, he doesn't want to impede justice. At the

same time, Attorney General, you refuse to assist in any way.

Over a year ago you, the Premier and the former Solicitor General were served with notices of examination for discovery and your lawyers wriggled out of it. The more you try to obscure the truth, the more you try to wriggle out of this mess, the more it's being asked, just what is it that you're hiding and covering up.

You've been a lawyer. You know how important the process of examination for discovery is to determining the facts. Will you confirm today that you, the Premier and the former Solicitor General will make yourselves available for examination for discovery in the George family's lawsuit?

Hon Mr Harnick: The member refers to a civil lawsuit that is ongoing. Counsel for various individuals have discussed those very issues that the member raises. There are issues pertaining to production of documents that are ongoing and at the appropriate time counsel will determine when that will be and those examinations for discovery I suspect will take place. Counsel will guide all the parties involved in the civil lawsuit as to the appropriate time for those examinations.

ROAD SAFETY

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): My question is to the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services, and it concerns actions that are being taken to make our communities safer as the government has committed to do. In particular, people in my community are concerned about the danger of careless and reckless drivers posing a threat to our children as they walk to and from local schools and parks. Can the minister tell this House what action is being taken by the government to keep children safe in these areas where children often walk?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I want to thank the member for Durham-York for her question. The priority of this government is the safety and protection of our communities and particularly of our children in those communities.

Today, I introduced a bill that, if passed, would establish special community safety zones to extend extra protection to areas such as school zones, crossings, school bus stops, day care centres and children's parks. Fines for driving infractions in the community safety zones would be doubled under the proposed bill.

The member for Timiskaming and the member for Welland-Thorold raised the issue of police resources in their statements today, which is why we've committed \$150 million in the budget for up to 1,000 additional uniformed police officers in the province, 50% of their salaries to be paid by the government of Ontario, so we can have those additional front-line police officers on the streets of Ontario.

Mrs Munro: I want to thank the Solicitor General for his answer, because it demonstrates this government's

resolve to protect our children and our communities from drivers who pose a danger to us all.

Can the minister please tell us what types of offences would have their fines doubled should the bill he has tabled be passed?

Hon Mr Flaherty: A number of moving offences involving motor vehicles would be subject to a doubled fine if they are committed within the community safety zones. If the bill is passed, this would include offences such as speeding, failing to stop, disobeying a red signal, disobeying an amber signal, improper turns and a number of other moving violations.

Taken together with the government's commitment to double fines for red light runners and following on our \$150-million commitment to other community safety initiatives in the recent budget, we are sending a strong message of support for community safety and letting aggressive drivers know they will not be tolerated. We are keeping our promise with respect to safe communities.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and it has to do with Ipperwash Provincial Park. As you know, the key issue there is whether there was a burial ground at Ipperwash Provincial Park or not.

I imagine you are aware that there is a letter that indicates that when your engineers, people working for the Ministry of Natural Resources — it says: "When cleaning out this park recently, the engineer" — that is, the provincial engineer — "discovered an old Indian burial ground and stated if the band would make a request to the provincial government, he was sure they would be glad to mark off and fence the plot." The council, as you will know, went on to request that the province fence off that burial ground.

This is quite a significant development. The question to you is this: Were you aware that it was an engineer working for the Ministry of Natural Resources who found this burial ground, and what do you plan to do about the matter?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I'll refer this question to the Honourable Charles Harnick.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As I have indicated, we have not received an official land claim pertaining to the site at Ipperwash park. As I've also indicated in this Legislature, if a request is made with respect to the definitive finding of a burial ground, we would certainly do our utmost to ensure that that burial ground would be protected. I've said that before and I say that again.

Mr Phillips: This is an extremely serious matter. An engineer working for your department, cleaning out the park, discovered the burial ground. It was the government's own employee. It wasn't the first nation that said it was there; it was your own employee who found it and said, "Request that it be fenced off."

I return to you, Minister, you who are responsible for this. Have you investigated this, and what did you find out when you investigated it? Will you return to the House and tell the House what you found out during that investigation? Will you commit to do that now?

Hon Mr Harnick: As I've indicated, and I've indicated this to this member before, if there are definitive findings that have been made pertaining to a burial ground, we would do our utmost to ensure that it was fenced off and properly protected. We've made that commitment and stand by it.

1500

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): In the absence of the Minister of Finance, I want to ask a question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Yesterday we asked a question on this issue of Bill 16, the property tax bill, and your colleague the Chair of Management Board defended the government's persistence in proceeding with the bill without committee hearings. You did the same today in answer to questions.

We know that the time allocation was scheduled to be called this afternoon and we've just been advised by your House leader that he won't be calling this question. Does this mean, Minister, that you're finally coming to your senses and you're prepared now to send this bill to committee, where it belongs?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): To answer the member of the third party, what the House leader calls is the House leader's business, but I can tell you that we are meeting with the clerks and treasurers as we speak — the meeting started at 3 o'clock, I believe — to go over that bill clause by clause to make sure they understand it, because we're sure that all the concerns they put in their letter can be addressed and the bill can proceed.

Mr Silipo: You can do it today or you can do it after the meeting or you can do it tomorrow and you can do it outside instead of doing it in here, but the reality is that it seems to us that you're finally realizing what the administrators who are going to have to implement this bill municipality by municipality have told you in writing. In 12 pages in this document they have outlined legislative errors, drafting errors, let alone the kind of "political and administrative nightmare" — their words — that they say will take place if this bill doesn't get out to committee and get fixed.

Why don't you just tell us today, give us your commitment that you've finally understood the need for this bill to be out in committee so we can at least fix the administrative problems, let alone the political nightmare you're going to cause for municipalities across the province?

Hon Mr Leach: Again, what the House leader calls, the House leader calls. But we are going over the concerns that were brought forward by the clerks and treasurers to make sure they understand the bill. Our understanding is

that there are parts of it that they have misinterpreted, and we want to make sure they clearly understand the meaning of the clauses. We're meeting with them to go over it clause by clause, and I'm confident that after that meeting their concerns will have been addressed. It's that simple.

CHILD CARE

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): My question is to the Minister without Portfolio responsible for children. Over the last three years I have had a number of constituents come forward who are concerned about the fact that there's nothing in place that recognizes parents who want to make the choice to have at least one of the parents stay home to look after children.

Minister, we know there are tax credits available for working parents, but could you clarify for us and for people in the province what this government is doing to recognize and support families who want to choose to give up one income to stay at home to look after children?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): I'm very glad to have this question, because this government has always felt that parents need to have a variety of child care options. While a family may decide to place their child in a formal or informal child care setting, they may also decide that the best choice for their children is to have one parent stay home, if it's possible, to raise the family.

Of course, as you've stated, if a parent chooses to stay at home, not only do they rely on a lower income for that family, but they've also been shut out of the traditional child care benefit. Our government has recognized this, and we've very proud of the options we are now giving to those parents.

Mr Klees: I know that many families across the province will be pleased to know that finally a government has recognized that stay-at-home parents do in fact provide a valuable service in this province. There will be questions about eligibility. I wonder if you could clarify for the House and for the families across this province precisely who can apply for this supplement, and how many people do you think will benefit from this?

Hon Mrs Marland: This child care supplement is designed to help modest- and middle-income families with children under seven years of age. We've combined the Ontario child care tax credit and \$100 million from the national child benefit to improve and expand child care options for Ontario families.

While the previous tax credit system allowed for a maximum credit of \$400 per child, the proposed benefit from the supplement would rise up to \$1,020 per child under seven for families with work earnings. This is a great improvement for families in Ontario.

This new supplement means that the vast majority of families who received the 1997 Ontario child care tax benefit would receive a larger benefit from the new program. Our new supplement would reach 210,000 families and support 350,000 children.

Families have told us they need more choices. We're responding to the needs of both families working outside of the home and stay-at-home parents in Ontario.

PETITIONS

ABORTION

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I have a petition signed by a number of residents from Woodslee.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

I affix my name to this petition.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition which I wish to present on behalf of the member for London North.

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences, and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

ABORTION

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): These petitions were gathered by Knights of Columbus councils in and around the city and region of Sudbury.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury, or illness, and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

I submit this petition on their behalf.

1510

SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My petition is to the Honourable David Johnson, Minister of Education and Training.

"Whereas no new capital funds have been provided by the province to address English Catholic school facility needs in Ottawa-Carleton since 1994; and

"Whereas failure to provide capital funding has resulted in a space crisis at Holy Trinity school in Kanata, evidenced by the current loading ratio of 144%; and

"Whereas continuing growth in student enrolment is projected to increase the overcrowding to 153% of the school's operational capacity by this September; and

"Whereas the crisis in accommodation will be compounded by the smaller class sizes announced by the government under Bill 160; and

"Whereas the current overflow of students is being accommodated by 30 portables and site restrictions prohibit the installation of further units; and

"Whereas no other alternative exists to accommodate increasing student numbers either at Holy Trinity high school or neighbouring board high schools; and

"Whereas current students number in excess of the capacity of the school are overtaxing core and specialty areas of the school, washrooms, lunchrooms, library, gymnasium, tech areas, laboratories etc, and as a consequence are negatively impacting program delivery and student safety; and

"Whereas the construction of the new high school will take approximately 18 months to complete;

"Be it resolved that the undersigned require the Minister of Education and Training to alleviate the space crisis at Holy Trinity high school in Kanata by providing the required funding to construct a new Catholic high school in the western sector of Ottawa-Carleton in Stittsville in sufficient time to permit opening of the new school by September 1999."

I add my name to this petition, which involves hundreds of parents.

SCHIZOPHRENIA

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): I have a petition on behalf of the people in my riding.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas you may be aware that schizophrenia affects approximately 1% of the population, it has a devastating impact on individuals, families and society, there are no cures and until recently, the treatment could be almost as devastating for some as the illness;

"Whereas recent drug developments have offered some new hope that the horrible effects of older drug therapies can be avoided; however, doctors must prescribe the older drug therapies to anyone without a private health plan; people are dying every day needlessly; over 300 people with mental illness jumped from the Bloor Street bridge in Toronto to their deaths this past year alone;

"We believe that all people should be allowed the best medical drugs available and therefore we petition the Ontario government."

I add my signature.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, do hereby request that the provincial government reconsider the action taken effective April 1, 1998, which decrees that only 20 visits

will be allowed under OHIP to patients requiring physiotherapy treatment per year."

I have affixed my own signature to that petition.

LEGAL AID

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I have a petition signed by the good citizens of Cambridge.

"We, the undersigned citizens of Cambridge, Ontario, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately cease the use of Ontario taxpayers' money for payment of Paul Bernardo's public defender fees for his appeal;

"We, the undersigned, find this decision abhorrent, extremely unacceptable and an insult to his victims, their families and to society in general.

"We feel that Mr Bernardo has a right to appeal his sentence but not at the expense of the citizens of Ontario."

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa East): I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion, three-year agreement with the Ontario Medical Association; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to improve patient access to chiropractic services on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough): I have a petition signed by a number of my constituents with regard to health care. Given that another petition has already been presented this afternoon, I will only read the operative clause.

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences, and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ottawa-Carleton Restructuring Advisory Group has prepared a preliminary report for the Ottawa-Carleton Development Services Restructuring Project; and

"Whereas the consultation process was selective and limited; and

"Whereas those who require services are being pitted against those who have services; and

"Whereas service to one group should not be at the expense of another, regardless of age or language; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services' 'corporate agenda' is one of wholesale destruction of the support system for the vulnerable; and

"Whereas this corporate agenda will threaten the health, safety and likely the lives of many disabled people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to stop this destructive restructuring project and provide adequate funding for quality services to the developmentally disabled."

I affix my signature to this.

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature. I'm presenting it on behalf of the Minister of Health, who cannot present petitions in this chamber. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion three-year agreement with the Ontario Medical Association; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to improve patient access to chiropractic services on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes, because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services is currently engaged in a restructuring process across all communities in Ontario which will affect all people and their families supported by developmental services; and

"Whereas the consultation process was selective and limited; and

"Whereas those who require services are being pitted against those who have services; and

"Whereas service to one group should not be at the expense of another, regardless of age or language; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services' 'corporate agenda' is one of wholesale destruction of the support system for the vulnerable; and

"Whereas this corporate agenda will threaten the health, safety and likely the lives of many disabled people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to stop this destructive restructuring project and provide adequate funding for quality services to those with developmental disabilities."

I add my name to this petition.

LEGAL AID

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I have a petition of 1,443 signatures from Grey county and Dufferin county which is entitled "Stop Paul Bernardo's Appeal."

"We, the undersigned, are opposed to the government funding of legal aid for Paul Bernardo's appeal. We want the government to prevent tried and convicted murderers, with admission of guilt, from using legal aid funded by taxpayers."

I have signed this petition.

1520

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition here signed by a number of people and is addressed to the assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields, and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences, and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

I'm affixing my signature to this document.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAX CUTS FOR PEOPLE AND FOR SMALL BUSINESS ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES IMPÔTS DES PARTICULIERS ET DES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 15, An Act to cut taxes for people and for small business and to implement other measures contained in the 1998 Budget / *Projet de loi 15, Loi visant à réduire les impôts des particuliers et des petites entreprises et à mettre en oeuvre d'autres mesures contenues dans le budget de 1998.*

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): First of all, I should say that we are surprised at this time that this order should be called since it was slated to be called this evening. What we were anticipating of course was the time allocation motion or the closure motion that the government was going to call with respect to Bill 16.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Whatever happened to that?

Mr Gerretsen: It's interesting to know what would happen with that. I think what the people of Ontario should understand is that Bill 16 is a very important piece

of legislation. It is in effect going to set the tone as to what you will pay in your local municipality as far as property taxes are concerned, from a business viewpoint, from an industrial viewpoint and as a residential taxpayer.

What's happened here over the last couple of days is really extraordinary. We've had an organization known as the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario come forward with a 13-page letter addressed to the government, saying, "You can't possibly let this bill pass without some very serious amendments or else you are putting the whole financial situation of our municipalities into chaos."

We had a meeting with this group this morning and they had a press conference at 1 o'clock this afternoon, basically to once again implore the government not to go ahead with it. There were questions raised about that issue in the House today by Dalton McGuinty, our leader.

Who knows? Maybe the government has come to its senses and realizes that rather than passing another bad piece of legislation — remember now, we've had four different bills dealing with basically the same issue. We've had Bill 106, Bill 149, Bill 164 and now this Bill 16. To prevent you from having to come back with another piece of legislation that would correct the mistakes you're doing in Bill 16, just maybe you've come to your senses and said to yourselves as a government, "Perhaps we should listen to the organization of municipal clerks and treasurers."

These are the people who will be dealing with this legislation. They're the people who will be dealing with the property taxpayers in our municipalities on a day-to-day basis. They know what the problems are with respect to this bill. They've outlined it in this letter that's 13 pages long. They have referred to this bill in such ways as: "This bill is complicated, cumbersome, confusing and, too often, badly drafted. It serves to perpetuate the bad system that the government was so bent on eliminating."

For the sake of the property taxpayers of this province, whether they're in your municipality or mine, whether they're residential property taxpayers or commercial-industrial taxpayers, I hope the government is for once listening and saying: "Let's listen to the experts. Let's at least make sure that we've finally got it right and that we're going to pass a piece of legislation the municipalities can work with." I hope the government is taking that into account.

Since we're dealing with the implementation of the budget in Bill 15, I just want to address one other issue that is related, because it was talked about in the budget as well. It deals with the one-line statement that was made in the budget in which it states, "The government is committed to supporting people with disabilities through a variety of measures, including the creation of an Ontarians with Disabilities Act."

Mr Speaker, that you were probably visited last week by members of this organization in your riding. I know that I was in my riding, and I know that many members of all parties were visited by the people with disabilities last week in their constituency offices. What these people are

basically asking is, "Live up to your commitment." Mike Harris made a commitment during the 1995 election campaign in which he stated that if he were Premier he would pass a bill known as the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. All these people are asking for at this point in time is that this bill be brought forward and that the bill be discussed with these people, that you open it up for consultation. That's all they're asking, which I think is probably about the least anybody could ask of a government. So bring the bill forward, no more delays.

The other day the Minister of Citizenship and Culture was asked about this: "When are you bringing the bill forward? When are you letting it out for consultation with the disabled community, and with the abled community as well?" Do it. Why are you holding back? Let's see what the real issues are out there for the disabled community, and let's see if we, from a legislative viewpoint, can help push that program along so they can become productive citizens in our society. That's all these people are looking for. So I just urge you to bring that bill forward as quickly as possible so that a meaningful dialogue with the disabled community can begin.

People sometimes ask me in my riding, "Is there anything good about this year's budget?" I have to admit there's one aspect I like about this budget. That deals with part IV of this particular bill, the Land Transfer Tax Act.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Would you ascertain whether or not there is a quorum present, please?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Would you please check if there is a quorum.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Kingston and The Islands.

1530

Mr Gerretsen: As I indicated before, there is one thing I like about this particular bill and that is the section dealing with the Land Transfer Tax Act. It basically extends the refund of the land transfer tax to first-time home buyers of newly constructed homes. I think this is a good idea. I think we all know that whatever we can do to get the construction industry moving, particularly home construction, is a good idea. Now, a good argument could be made as to whether or not it should be opened up for first-time home buyers of perhaps not-new construction as well, but that's an argument we can have at some point in time in the future.

That's one positive aspect about the budget, but there are also, as you well know, some very negative aspects of it.

One of the issues that my colleague from St Catharines feels very strongly about is the whole issue of gaming. What this bill does is it allows an amendment to the Ontario Lottery Corporation Act to basically expand the list to include, under the Ontario Lottery Corporation Act, the provision of health care services. It goes on to say further that at least one half of the corporation's net

revenue from table gaming must be spent for those purposes.

I don't believe that health care, which we all value and for which we are known throughout the world for always having been accessible and for being a caring society, that the health care costs of our system ought to be paid for out of gambling revenue. I happen to think that is simply not a wise course of action to take. To link it to a circumstance which, let's face it, destroys a lot of individuals, destroys a lot of people who become addicted to gambling etc, I don't think is a wise thing to do. I would urge the government to reconsider that aspect. I just don't think that our health care costs, the system we all value or at least we all should value, should be paid for out of a revenue source like this. I have some grave concerns about that. Undoubtedly the member for St Catharines will be addressing this in a more comprehensive fashion later on.

I suppose one area that I also have great difficulty with and I've talked about before is the whole notion of an income tax cut. Let me be absolutely clear about it. Would I like an income tax cut? Definitely. Who wouldn't like to pay less taxes? The real issue, though, is whether or not we as a society can afford an income tax cut at this time.

As I've said in this Legislature before, and I will say it again, how can you possibly cut the revenue side of the provincial financial statement? How can you possibly collect less taxes from individuals, particularly since the income tax cut benefits the richer people in our society, while at the same time you are still running an annual deficit?

Yes, the annual deficit is less than it was three or four years ago and, yes, economic times in parts of Ontario are better than they were. I can tell you that in eastern Ontario we certainly haven't seen much of this economic recovery that seems to be taking place in some sectors in the Metro Toronto area and perhaps in the Golden Horseshoe area. You talk to the average person in the Kingston area, you talk to the people in construction, you talk to the people in sales and they certainly haven't seen the economic recovery that everybody seems to think is taking place in Ontario.

How can you cut income taxes when you're still running an annual deficit? As I've stated before and as your own budget document clearly indicates, the public debt of this province during your term of office is going to increase from \$89 billion to \$115 billion. What that means basically is that we can't afford an income tax cut right now. Your own document indicates that the interest cost on the public debt has gone up from something like \$7.8 billion three years ago to over \$9 billion today, which is more than what this province spends in social service costs. The social service budget for the Comsoc ministry is something in the neighbourhood of \$7.8 billion.

So, yes, would I like an income tax cut? Of course. Who wouldn't like an income tax cut? The problem is we can't afford it as a society. We cannot afford it as a society at this time.

I have some great difficulties with that. I think that as the tables in the budget clearly indicate, the people who

make the most money stand to gain by far the biggest share of the income tax cut, as the member for Scarborough-Agincourt pointed out yesterday. It's kind of interesting that the people who are making \$250,000 or more in yearly income will in effect be getting \$500 million of the total income tax cut. It's kind of interesting that this figure happens to equal the amount of money you have downloaded on municipalities.

Yes, there are some municipal councils around this province that have been trying to keep tax increases as low as they can, or maybe even reach the zero limit, because basically you have shoved the problem back down to them. But nobody has ascertained yet what this has meant in those municipalities as far as services are concerned. Are services going to be at a much lower level than they were before? I suppose only time will tell.

I see that my time is almost up, and I would just once again implore the government to take a look at the income tax cut. You know, as I mentioned yesterday, I think you would have been intellectually honest if you had said, "Okay, we want to make all these various cuts, but at least we would be getting the deficit numbers much lower than they currently are."

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm delighted to comment on the speech made by the member for Kingston and The Islands. I will confess that I wasn't able to follow all of it. I just want to clarify one piece, and if he dealt with this before I came into the House, I'll be happy to go back and take a look at the Hansard.

He will know that I agree with him and we in the NDP agree with the Liberals when they say they are against the tax cut. We point out, as we have all been pointing out, the problems that the tax cut has caused and will continue to cause to the average family out there. As I have said on other occasions, half the taxpayers in the province make less than \$35,000. Typical families will end up paying more rather than less as a result of the tax cut. While they may get, on the one hand, some benefit from the tax cut, they will end up paying more than that benefit through increased property taxes; through increased user fees, which Mike Harris used to call taxes and now says they're not; through a variety of other things like payment for medicines if they're seniors; increased — in the hundreds of dollars, and in the thousands of dollars by the time this term is over — tuition fees for college and university.

We agree with the kind of devastation that the Mike Harris tax cut is causing. We have proposed as a New Democratic caucus that we would undo the portion of the tax cut that goes to people making over \$80,000. That, in fact, would get us \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion that we want and need to reinvest back in education and health care. I want to know from the member for Kingston and The Islands why it is that he, if he believes so strongly that the tax cut is wrong for the province, would not seek to undo it, in part or in whole, why he would persist in keeping the tax cut he so strongly opposes.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I listened with great interest to the speeches by both the member for

Scarborough-Agincourt and the member for Kingston and The Islands. The member for Kingston and The Islands says we can't cut taxes until we balance the budget. Yet I can very well remember the provincial Liberal Party promising to do that in the last election campaign. So when the member speaks about being intellectually honest, I know he'll want to review the Liberal Party's plan because I know they presented a plan.

What did they promise to do in the red book? We know that Lyn McLeod's word was her bond with the people. If they were going to wait until the budget was balanced before they cut taxes, that's not what they said during the election. "The Liberal government would cut taxes by 5% during their first term. They would put \$1.7 billion back in the pockets of Ontario." And they wouldn't just cut income taxes, they were going to cut taxes on auto insurance, on first-time homes, on land transfer tax, on money spent by property owners, on forestry management. The Liberal government wanted to cut small business corporate taxes. The Liberal government wanted to cut the number of small businesses required to file corporate minimum income taxes and give businesses a 10% tax cut for investing in certain areas — all kinds of tax cuts. I've checked the finance table, and it was before the budget was balanced.

1540

I just wonder, have they repudiated that policy? Have they said, "We totally disagree with everything we put forward in the last provincial election"? Are they abandoning it? I simply can't understand how they can change gears. And now they've changed gears entirely again. Not only are they against cutting taxes, but the foundation of the Liberal Party's economic plan is to keep all the tax cuts. They were bad when they were presented, they are morally wrong today, but under Dalton McGuinty that's the foundation of his economic policy.

It's important that we look at action, action speaking louder than words. If it was good enough for Liberals to promise before an election when they wanted people's votes, surely to God it would be good enough now to help create jobs for hardworking taxpayers in Ontario.

Mr Bradley: They must keep the members of the Conservative caucus and their people very busy, particularly the ones who write the material, for even the new ideologues in the House to come forward with this, because constantly we have the Premier's lackeys get up — that's not a good word, I guess — the Premier's friends get up with these little arguments.

I must say I agree with the member for Kingston and The Islands that what we have hidden in this is an opportunity to introduce more gambling, to escalate gambling in this province. Just as my friend from Beaches-Woodbine has been concerned about this escalation of gambling opportunities, I am concerned about it, particularly with the situation we have with the expansion of so-called charity casinos or, as I call them, the Mike Harris gambling halls.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Will you close them up?

Mr Bradley: The member interjects. I should ignores it, but I have to say this to him: What you want to sign is eight-year contracts with your Tory friends for these things and then you want the people of this province to pay to get out of those contracts with your friends. You've got a lot of nerve, my friend. You've got a lot of nerve saying that.

I admired the view Reverend Derwyn Shea, my good friend from the west end of Toronto, expressed when he talked to the Hamilton Spectator and said he was against this expansion of gambling. I agreed with him then.

If you stick the next government with year-eight contracts, you're going to force people in this province to pay to get out of those contracts. That's why you should stop it now. That's why the member for Beaches-Woodbine gets up and says she doesn't want them in her neighbourhood. That's why I get up in this House now. Block them now. Join us, as you have said to the Hamilton Spectator. You join us, Reverend Shea. We want you on our side.

Ms Lankin: I appreciate having the opportunity to respond to the member for Kingston and The Islands.

I just say in response to the member for St Catharines, if there was a way in this bill that we could stop the charity gaming casinos, I would be right there with him to stop them. Unfortunately, this bill is not about that.

This bill is about a number of things. The centrepiece of it is the completion of the Mike Harris tax scheme, putting in place a tax scheme in the province which will benefit primarily the wealthiest of the province by a return of tax dollars. We've seen the implications of that and what it means in terms of cuts to services in health and education and a wide variety of government services.

I am perplexed in some ways by the member for Kingston and The Islands' comments. While I agree with him very strongly that we should be opposed to this portion of the tax cut, as we are opposed to the entire tax cut, I still remain perplexed, given that his party and his leader have said, "However, don't ask us to do anything about it if we're elected."

As recently as this weekend, on Sunday, the leader of the Liberal Party was at an event along with the leader of our party, Howard Hampton. When he said the Harris government has its priorities wrong, it shouldn't be doing a tax cut, it should be putting money into children's services, he was asked by parents of children with mental illness, who are struggling for more funding for their system, if he would therefore reverse this tax scheme the Harris government put in. He said, "No, because then I wouldn't be elected Premier."

What's the story here? Either you believe it is morally wrong or you don't believe it is morally wrong. Either you believe it is bad government policy to give money back to the wealthiest in this province and to strip our health care, our education, our children's services, or you don't believe that. You can't talk out of both sides of your mouth. So I say, while I support the sentiment of being in opposition, I'm proud to be of a party that's prepared to do something about that.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, two minutes.

Mr Gerretsen: I'd like to thank the members for Dovercourt, Nepean, St Catharines and Beaches-Woodbine for their comments.

There has been a very interesting phenomenon take place in this House since we've come back, over the last week and a half or so. It's as if the right-wing neo-cons have now joined the left-wing socialists in an attack on what I consider to be the reasonable centre, where most of the people of Ontario are. It's going on here on a day-to-day basis.

Read your own budget if you want to know where the money is coming from. As I indicated last night, the revenues from retail sales tax alone have shot up by \$2.5 billion in a matter of three years. Corporation taxes have gone up another \$2.5 billion. There is \$5 billion of revenue in two areas alone that have come in to more than enough pay for any campaign promises that we may make.

I totally agree: The vast majority of the people of Ontario feel that they're paying too much in taxes. For any party, in my opinion, to start talking about increasing taxes simply isn't going to fly with the people of Ontario, particularly when there are other revenue sources already available to pay for those election promises or to pay to restore some of the health care cuts and the education cuts that have already —

Ms Lankin: That's nonsense.

Mr Gerretsen: She says, "That's nonsense." I guess we'll just have to wait and see, because it can be done and it will be done.

In the last 10 seconds I have, I cannot understand how a party that preaches fiscal responsibility can allow the public debt of this province to go up from \$89 billion to \$115 billion in just three years.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I'm happy to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 15, the Tax Cuts for People and for Small Business Act. I will be speaking to two parts of this, although there are many: one, the Ontario Loan Act, and the other, the Ontario Lottery Corporation Act.

On the first matter, under the Ontario Loan Act, this authorizes borrowing of up to \$4.6 billion, all of which, we argue, will go to pay for the phoney tax cut. We want to talk about that, because it's an important part of this centrepiece for this government. We do our best to expose it to the extent we can and to talk about it, because a whole lot of people out there don't have a good sense of what this is all about.

You will recall that this government has cut billions of dollars out of essential areas of service that the province has been providing for years; \$5 billion to \$8 billion has been cut from our budgets. Areas of health, education, environment, labour, culture, every ministry connected to this government, have been decimated by them, and even the revenues coming in simply cannot make up for these devastating cuts. They can't. That's why the debt is high and that's why the deficit continues to be high. But the

reason this deficit and debt remain particularly high is because of the phoney tax cut scheme. The gross indecency of this tax scheme connects to those who earn over \$80,000, and that is about \$2 billion of this tax cut.

We have had revenues in this province over the last two years that would have dealt with our deficit by now. We have had interest rates that have been low, in the history of this province and this country, which should have dealt with the debt and deficit we have had in this province. We have had more job opportunities — it's true indeed — and that has brought more revenue into the province that should have dealt with the deficit and debt.

But we haven't dealt with it, in spite of the claims by these family value Tories on the other side. To the contrary, we still have a high deficit, largely due to the income tax cut that is putting a tremendous burden on our system.

This Ontario Loan Act authorizes borrowing of up to \$5 billion, largely for the purpose of paying this phoney tax cut you have given to folks. It's a phoney scheme, and we do our best to expose it. We argue, as New Democrats, that in an economy that is booming, we should not be giving money away, literally, to those who do not need it. Those who earn over \$80,000 do not need money in their pockets. Presidents of banks who earn \$1.5 million in salaries, excluding other benefits they make, do not need Tory generosity. They already earn enough.

1550

The people of Ontario urge you to reconsider. Obviously you're not going to reconsider, because the final phase of this phoney tax scheme will apply as of July 1, so you will not go back. That is quite clear. That is why we talk to the public and not to you, because of course you will not reconsider, except if the public tells you that you have made a profound error in giving those who don't need money the generosity of a Conservative ideology in their pockets. It's got to end. It is obscene.

We could have had plenty of money to deal with our educational system needs. We could have had plenty of money to deal with the health cuts, the hospital closures, the atrocities you've inflicted there. There would have been sufficient dollars available to help out had you not given money away to people who didn't need it.

You continue to profess that all this money that goes to rich people is going to generate jobs in this province. You continue to say it, in spite of any evidence to the contrary. You in fact have never, ever produced any evidence by anyone that says, "Because of this income tax scheme, particularly to those who do not need it, we have created thousands of jobs," other than the fact that the economy has generated jobs, but not due to the income tax cut.

Recall that the feds didn't do it, and they have experienced an economic boom as well, so it can't be because of the income tax cut, but other reasons. But you continue to claim as Tories that it's your income tax scheme that is producing these jobs. It isn't so. You have not brought forth any evidence from anyone to show the contrary.

We argue to you that this is an ideological thing with you folks, designed to cater to your rich buddies. We as New Democrats argue that that 6% which earns close to \$2 billion of your income tax scheme should be stopped. That \$2 billion in a healthy economy could be redistributed in areas of need, in areas that produce a civil society, that is good for us all as opposed to the ruinous effects that you are imposing on the province and the people of Ontario.

We believe that as more and more people understand this, they will make you more and more accountable. You have done a good job of convincing people that there is a whole lot of money going into their pockets and you've convinced them that you have created jobs as a result of it.

We do our best in opposition to put out our position as best we can and show them that you are in complete error in a direction that has nothing whatsoever to do with creating jobs, but has to do with supporting friends of yours. We're saying to the Liberals, who are on the right side of us, that they need to come up with their own ideas, ideas that do not vacillate, that are anchored somewhere concretely, because Liberal politics generally means they are anchored nowhere but anchored everywhere. We call the Liberal politics the M and M of mushy movables. We urge them to anchor themselves somewhere concretely so that people know where they stand.

Yes, we are in opposition together and are friendly to each other clearly because the enemy is over there, no doubt, but with the Liberals it is difficult to tolerate their speeches and their remarks saying, "We can't afford it now." This tax scheme has been passed already and it's in its last moments of life — I wish it were — but they are implementing the last 7%. You folks have done it. It's a done deal.

They say what you have done is bad and they repeat our arguments and sound like New Democrats, but when it comes to proposing an alternative to this income tax scheme they don't have one. I find that objectionable. I have to tell you that. It isn't sufficient for them to say, "It's wrong at this time." They need to propose something, and they haven't. New Democrats have proposed that \$2 billion of that income tax scheme be phased away, be taken away from people who do not need it.

I urge people who lean to the Liberals or who are Liberal supporters to hold them accountable to this big issue, because when the recession comes — and it always does, by the way, every seven years or so, as unlucky as we were while we were in power — and the sources of funding cease and people are unemployed and more money has to go out by the province to protect people who are left aside by the market, when money is needed to maintain a certain level of civil society to do that but the money is not coming in because the economy is not working and you have an income tax system that is draining money out because you've got to borrow \$5 billion a year, what do you do then?

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): Hire people.

Mr Marchese: What do you do then? Hire people? How do you do that, Mr Ford? How do you hire people? What's he talking about? I think you'll understand, because Tories usually talk about Economics 101, as if they understand anything about what they talk about —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Marchese: When recessions come, what it means is you have high levels of unemployment. It means that people are not working and revenue is not coming in. With an income tax cut of \$5 billion that is draining your economy, what do you do then?

Mr Shea: You stimulate the economy.

Mr Marchese: You stimulate the economy, which is what New Democrats say, but Tories don't like to stimulate the economy. In recessions, they like to kill the economy by stopping their spending. That kind of economics would create a worse state of economic affairs.

Interjection.

Ms Lankin: Pure arrogance.

The Acting Speaker: Order. It's becoming personal. It shouldn't be.

Mr Marchese: Recessions come, and the Liberals will have to face that as well. They faced it in the past at the federal level. The Tories —

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Etobicoke-Humber, please.

Mr Marchese: I love their interventions, Speaker, please. As long as I hear them, I like them. I need him for my remarks. Please, Mr Ford, you continue, but be clear in your remarks.

This income tax scheme will at some point become a matter of debate for the public. It will become part of public discourse. It isn't now, but it will become so as people begin to understand the effect it has on them as individuals and on communities and on the general society.

Sadly, many issues are not part of public discourse; for example, the matter that was dealt with here yesterday in terms of the Calgary resolution. The CBC did a program this morning and went to Union Station and asked a whole bunch of people, "What do you think about the Calgary resolution?" Most people didn't have a clue. Some didn't care. That applies to many issues we deal with in society. It's true.

1600

With the income tax scheme it's a little different of course, because as long as the minister of privatization goes out there saying, "This means a whole lot of money in your pocket, this is good for you," people are going to say, "Yes, I guess so; maybe I'm not seeing much of it, but I guess it's good if you tell me it is." But when it becomes part of an intelligent dialogue and discourse, then people having an opportunity to review that stuff will have a different point of view in this matter. So it's a question of time, and we say to the public, make Liberals accountable for their ideas. Don't simply accept that

marshy, movable thing that belongs as the property of the Liberals. Don't accept it. Pin them down to something.

You need to be able to hold them accountable as well, particularly on this income tax scheme, because the Liberals say they will put more money into the health care system and they will put more money into the educational system, presumably the environment and children and everything else. Where will they get the money from? A booming economy, which is where the Tories are getting the same money from. But we have sustained cuts in all these areas.

How could the Liberals deal with that issue any differently with the same money? How could they? It's the same problem they would face as the Tories are dealing with. We are sustaining cuts in a way unseen ever before because these people are eliminating the role of the state. These folks are taking themselves out of the picture except when big business needs them.

On issues of the multilateral agreements on investments, those big boys, the Fortune 500 boys, the ones with the big grease, those people are coming to the government, saying, "We need you; we need you to get every barrier out of the way for us." When they need governments, governments are there to protect the interests of the big multinational corporations. The Tories don't mind playing that kind of role for them, but when it comes to protecting the interests of society, those who are left behind by the market, they're not there.

That issue will come up. I know it will be the subject of debate in this election, no doubt, and it will continue after the election. I have no doubt about that as well.

I want to move on to the Ontario Lottery Corporation Act, because there it speaks of repealing all provisions related to the video lottery terminals and also adds providing health care and funding charities to the authorized list of purposes for the lottery corporation's net profits.

You will recall that on Monday we had this debate and I spoke to this issue, and you will also recall that the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay was saying that we had various alternatives, that we could have fixed the old system or moved on to something new. I say to you they should have fixed the old system. That would have been the better thing to do. Those Monte Carlos, nomadic little casinos might have had problems, no doubt. We say to the government, "Fix that problem; do not through the usual incompetence of your government create another problem," which is what they did.

They eliminated these Monte Carlos on the notion or basis of saying, "We're going to create 44 more established, controlled casinos." The problem is, most communities don't want them, so those charities they make reference to that have no access to those dollars any more, of course, are crying foul. They say, "We need the money," and they do. They need it because governments have no other source of providing it and they've been cutting the source of funding in those areas. So these poor charities, who do good deeds in our society, have no money. They're stuck. They're stuck because municipal-

ities do not want these casinos and these guys can't stick them there.

What have they tried to do? They've said in their April 9 announcement, "We will replace the VLTs with slot machines." VLTs must have some demonic kind of connotation, because they have agreed to eliminate the video lottery terminals and replace them with slot machines. Slot machines, as I said on Monday, are as equally evil as the VLTs, except with the VLTs the money is robbed out of your pockets faster than with slot machines. None the less they've announced they're getting rid of them.

They've also said, "We are increasing the take for charities," as a way of bribing them to then have charities exert pressure on the communities to have casinos established there. They increase the take probably from \$10 million or so to \$180 million to these charities. It's a form of bribery. They are using the charities as a cover, as a front for grabbing huge revenues from their own citizens.

The final one is to advance funding for charities during the transition time. However, we don't know, but we think it's tied to conditions, including whether or not a municipality approves permanent casinos.

All these tools are given to municipalities in order to bribe charities and to bribe communities to have casinos in their own backyards. It's an obscenity, really. It speaks to the gross incompetence of this government. On almost every bill we have dealt with in this assembly, there has not been one bill that has not been infected by the incompetence of this government. Each time they do so, they have had to introduce yet another bill to fix the previous incompetence. On Bill 16 they don't want to have a debate. People around the city and everywhere are saying, "Please, let's review this, because it's full of mistakes." Bill 16 needs to be defeated in this House.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I'm pleased to respond to the member for Fort York's comments. The bottom line is, it's well known across Ontario that tax cuts are working. Tax cuts are working because they're creating more jobs, an enormous explosion of jobs happening this year, and I anticipate through the rest of the year into the next and hopefully beyond.

If you look at the statistics in the Niagara Peninsula, for example, there was 14.2% unemployment back in 1993-94, when the NDP and the unions ran the province with high taxes, high spending and high deficits. We had high unemployment as a result, 14.2%. Now, following through on our commitments in the Common Sense Revolution, cutting taxes, working towards a balanced budget, eliminating red tape — a complete turnaround across Ontario and in the Peninsula, where unemployment today is not 14.2%, not 13.2%, not even 8.2%, but down around 7.2%, cut in half.

That means companies like Ronal Manufacturing in Stevensville, just winning a major contract — home of the Tim Hudak Action Centre — and companies like Fraser Ship Repairs in Port Colborne have doubled their

employment under this government. It makes sense. Tax cuts make sense because they return more money to consumers' pockets, their own hard-earned money, and also give them an incentive to work longer and to work harder, because for every additional hour they work, they're keeping more of their money.

The member for Fort York said there's been no support for the tax cut, but I have an entire list, and I think I'll use some more in the debate later. The chief economist at CIBC Wood Gundy said, "In today's economy, tax cuts make a lot of sense." The Ontario Real Estate Association is in favour. "The government's efforts to eliminate red tape and the tax cut should assist in attracting new investment to Ontario." An interesting one as well: "They" — the taxpayers — "have more money in their pockets, therefore they have more money to spend. Tax cuts increase domestic consumption." Ironically, that quote is from the federal minister, John Manley, a Liberal.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I'm listening to the rhetoric and I kind of enjoy it in many ways. You would think that the economy was being driven by this made-in-Ontario solution in terms of taxes. There's something to be said — everyone knows it's expansionary when you borrow a lot of money. That's an expansionary fiscal policy. You're doing that. You're borrowing pretty close to \$20 billion to pay for your programming and for your tax cuts and those kinds of things. Yes, you're going to get some expansion. That's the way it works — 101 I think the member for Fort York calls it — and that's nice. But I want to talk about real people in the real world. I just wonder if the government knows. I had a gentleman in my office about a month ago in Elliot Lake. He has worked very hard in the community for the past 20 years, maybe more. He's worked with the Navy League.

The Navy League has for some time had a camp north of Elliot Lake. It's used by, not only the kids in the Navy League and the Sea Cadets and the Army Cadets, but by the Boy Scouts, church groups, Girl Guides. Guess what? He gets a bill, backdated: "You owe \$900 in property taxes on this camp," some land they lease from the ministry. On the decrepit buildings that are still on the property they have to pay \$900 in back taxes. Now they're going to have to start paying \$400 to \$500 to \$600. They raise their money through tag days. That's how they get their money. They raise them at bingo. But now they raise less because of the competition and the things the government has done to bingo. They're wondering, what's going on?

1610

Ms Lankin: I'm pleased to respond to my colleague's comments. I of course agree with him very much. I think of the ludicrousness of a government fiscal policy which borrows more, continues to run a higher deficit than is necessary and continues to add to the debt, particularly from a government which says one of its most important objectives is to eliminate the deficit, the ludicrousness of doing that and at the same time creating havoc in our health care and our education system and with cuts to

children and family services. That has real problems in terms of how government supports people in need in our communities. I fail to understand what could be at all referred to as common sense in that approach.

One of the other comments my friend made I thought was interesting. He referred to the mushy movables. With all due respect to all members of the House, he was referring to the official opposition's position with respect to this issue of taxation and the tax cut. The Harris tax scheme is one which benefits the wealthiest in this province and takes money away from needed programs in health and education. It's one which we deplore and which the Liberal Party says they deplore. Yet at the same time the leader of the Liberal Party continues to say, "However, I would do nothing about changing it." I don't understand that.

Our leader, Howard Hampton, has said very clearly that we would reverse the tax scheme for those earning over \$80,000 a year — the people who've primarily benefited from this tax scheme — and put that money back into health care and education. Where would the Liberals get the money to reinvest in health care and education? They say, "We're just going to grow the economy." What that means is that if the economy doesn't grow, if there is another recession, the Liberals do not have a penny to put into health and education. They would sustain those Harris government cuts. That, to me, makes as much sense as the Common Sense Revolution, which makes no sense in terms of good public policy for the people of Ontario.

Mr Shea: The people of Ontario must be watching this debate today and be totally bemused. They're watching a debate that occurred three years ago, I remind us. They're watching a debate that was in fact settled by the electorate three years ago.

The government of this day placed before the people of Ontario a number of policies that said: "We believe in tax cuts. We believe that we will stimulate the economy, that it will work, that over a period of time we will balance the budget and we will begin to pay down the debt." In the CSR, for those who are quick to speak about it, they will find the inflationary figures that are part of the borrowing costs, so we'll begin to pay down the deficit and then the debt. That was all laid before the people of Ontario, honestly, clearly, forthrightly, no one hiding behind any other facts or figures or gobbledygook. It was laid out very clearly for the electorate to decide.

The people of Ontario made a decision. The people of Ontario said: "Yes, we understand. Yes, we agree with tax cuts. Get on and do the job." That is what this government has been doing. It was not done in secret, it was not done in privacy; it was done openly, in a democratic procedure called an election. What this government has been doing is responding to the will of the people.

I take a little bit of umbrage with the inference that this is the government's money. We're talking about the money of the people. It is their money, the money of the hardworking people of Ontario, who have simply said: "It is time to make sure that we share directly in the dividends

of our hard labour. It is time for us to have something to say about how our money is spent, that we will be able to make direct decisions about how that money will be spent." The tax cut is an issue that was dealt with, I put to you, three years ago by the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: I thank all the members for their comments. In response to the member for High Park-Swansea and the member for Niagara South — they both claim and argue that they're simply returning the money that belongs to them, or as the member for High Park-Swansea was saying, it's the money of the people — I understand those concepts; a lot of people do as well.

We don't disagree that this issue has of course been dealt with in the election three years ago. That's quite true. But what we are doing in these debates is to expose the problems that this promise of yours has caused for the people of Ontario. When we say that we are returning their own money, what we are doing is borrowing \$5 billion a year to give money back to people. We don't have it in our pocket to give away, back to them; we are borrowing to give back to them.

Not only that, we are saying, "The money you are borrowing, as a way of increasing the deficit and increasing the debt, is going to people who do not need it." A banker who gets \$120,000 back doesn't need the money. He's got a high salary. He doesn't need it. He's got a high salary and the bonus is high as well. It is indecent and unethical for these people to argue that they deserve this money and that it's theirs. It's borrowed money and it's hurting our programs because of it. We will put this to the electorate in the election coming, and we hope people will listen to the devastation this tax scheme has caused.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): It's with pleasure that I rise to speak to this bill, Bill 15, titled Tax Cuts for People and for Small Business Act. The reason I am pleased to speak is the fact that this 1998 budget, the third budget introduced by our government, brings us one step closer to erasing the havoc, a word that was mentioned recently by the member for Beaches-Woodbine, wrought on us by the previous two governments, one step closer to bringing taxation levels down to where they were before the Liberals and NDP took power, and one step closer to realizing the important goal of balancing the budget and closing the book on the tax and spend chapter of Ontario's economic history.

One of the main reasons for this dramatic upswing in the fortunes of Ontarians is the tax cuts implemented by this government. They are already paying for themselves, in jobs and in the revenue that comes with those jobs. Very simply, I mean that taxes are down and jobs are up, and we know there are now 325,000 net new private sector jobs created since 1995 in Ontario.

Because taxes have been reduced and cash is left in the pockets of employers, employees and investors, revenue from new taxpayers has, at the very least, offset this cost of implementing tax cuts, not to mention the intangible

values of self-worth and achievement now enjoyed by those 325,000 working Ontarians.

Catherine Swift, president and chief executive officer of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, while speaking to members of the Haldimand-Norfolk Manufacturers' Association last week in my riding of Norfolk, had this to say:

"Optimism abounds for small business operators in Ontario. A strong US economy, good economic growth, low interest rates, increased job creation and" — I stress here — "positive relations between business and the provincial government have all contributed to brightening the financial outlook in the province."

1620

It's no coincidence that the two best-performing provinces since the early 1990s recession, which we have heard a bit about this afternoon, are the two that are distributing tax cuts, Alberta and Ontario. To continue the words of Catherine Swift:

"The recovery has been more robust and will last longer because of this government's policies." This was quoted in a local Simcoe Reformer interview. "There is no doubt in my mind that Bob Rae and his cronies made things worse in the recession with their policies."

We very recently heard the case put forward by the member for Fort York of the value of spending one's way out of a recession, and I wish to continue to refute that idea. We have heard this concept — it might be considered an economic theory in some quarters — that you could actually spend your way out of a recession.

Mr Marchese: Would the income tax cut have been good then?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Fort York, you had your turn. That's it.

Mr Barrett: As any farmer in my riding or any businessman knows, you can't spend your way to prosperity, especially when you bring in 32 tax increases, as the NDP did.

By the same token — I will mention the provincial Liberals and I wish to remind people of this — the provincial Liberals jacked up taxes 33 times, and they unfortunately failed to seize the opportunity to right some economic wrongs during those fantastic boom times in the mid- to late 1980s.

This combination of bad government policies had serious repercussions for people in my riding of Norfolk. For example, Ivey's Florists and Misner's Fishery both closed in my home town of Port Dover. In Simcoe we lost Nabisco Canners, Cronkwright Transport and American Can. I used to work at American Can and, at one time, so did 625 other local people. Now it's an empty shell of a factory downtown, full of broken glass and shattered memories of high-paying employment which was close to home.

Time is crucial. We must encourage small business and consumer and investor confidence. That is why in our 1998 budget we are proposing 36 new tax reductions in addition to the previously announced 30 tax cuts. Like the previous 30 tax cuts, these new tax cuts target low- to

middle-income earners, small business, and are designed as well and are coupled with our program to remove barriers to prosperity.

In contrast to the plant closings of the early 1980s, last year Simcoe, the location of my constituency office, saw a \$25-million investment in its largest private sector employer, the Good Humour-Breyers ice cream plant. As company president, Kevin Boyce, states, "Clearly deficit reduction, low interest rates, declining unemployment and a commitment to reduce the taxation burden are policies of the current government that are helping to sustain business confidence."

This sentiment is echoed by Dave Murphy, president of our local Simcoe and District Chamber of Commerce. Mr Murphy said, "The 1998 budget can only be beneficial to everyone from retailers to manufacturers." Mr Murphy added: "It will allow an injection of spending. The ripple effect will mean a stronger economy and a healthier atmosphere overall."

To continue to boost our economy both in my riding and provincially, our government plans to implement the final stage of the personal income tax cuts this July 1, a full six months ahead of schedule. This fulfils our election promise to deliver an average 30% tax cut to Ontario taxpayers. We're ahead of schedule to eliminate the deficit, and we will balance the budget by the year 2000-01. As well, legislation will be introduced to prevent further deficit spending.

This 30% cut in the provincial income tax rate provides a much-needed \$33-million infusion of cash, which goes straight into the hands of my constituents in the region of Haldimand-Norfolk. This will obviously boost and continue to boost our local economy. The economies of neighbouring Brant and Oxford will also benefit from government getting off people's backs and out of their pockets to the tune of \$36 million in Oxford county and \$38 million in Brant.

Some naysayers across the way question this tax cut. It's being done for some very clear and historical reasons. This government is bringing in a 30% tax reduction because, very simply, we were elected to do so and a promise made is a promise kept. Just as this government has met such commitments as reducing the employer health tax and reducing the small business corporations tax, we are committed to honouring our promise: tax relief for the people of Ontario.

Business and industry will also benefit immensely from education tax cuts in my riding and across the province. When fully implemented, the Haldimand-Norfolk region will see a 21% cut in education taxes for both commercial and industrial property, Oxford county will see a 14% reduction and Brant a 22% reduction.

This 1998 budget contains no fewer than 35 job-creating tax cuts and credits. For example, the land transfer tax rebate for first-time home buyers will again be extended, for another 12 months. The retail sales tax rebate on building materials for farmers will also be extended for another 12 months, continuing this government's record of working for farmers.

What course of events has led us to make this promise to cut taxes? To understand this we must look back over the past 10 years when we were hit with a total of \$7.5 billion in new or increased taxes, since the Liberal-NDP accord of 1985. From 1985 to 1994, personal income per capita increased by 54%, but the burden of provincial taxes per capita increased by 73%, more than eroding any pay increases people were receiving.

During that lost decade, free-wheeling government spending in combination with relentless tax hikes and failed job creation schemes contributed to Ontario's fiscal crisis. During that period government spending almost doubled, from \$29 billion to \$54 billion, and the provincial debt more than doubled under the NDP, from \$42 billion in 1990-91 to \$100 billion in 1995.

What did all this mean for Ontario? Quite simply, a lot of money was taken out of people's pockets and put into the accounts of special interest groups. The effect of all this? We remember the recession of the 1990s. The economy slowed. Consumers, businesses and investors all lost confidence. Rebuilding that market means leaving money in the hands of people who earn it.

When the Liberals took office in 1985, the first thing they did, with the support of their coalition NDP colleagues, was to raise the maximum personal income tax rate. They also increased alcohol and tobacco taxes — the sin taxes. Really what the Liberals did during that time of prosperity throughout the province was sinful in more ways than one.

In 1988 the Liberals gained a majority government and so ended the NDP-Liberal coalition. The new government's budget imposed even more tax increases. These increases were particularly hard on low- and middle-income earners. To ensure that the Liberal tax grab snagged everyone, they hiked the personal income tax rate to 51% in 1988 and 52% in 1989. The retail sales tax was also increased from 7% to 8% and its application was broadened. Gasoline taxes were increased and alcohol and tobacco taxes were again increased by the Liberals.

The NDP government introduced its first budget in 1991 and announced that it would spend its way out of the recession, as mentioned by the member for Fort York. That particular government drove the provincial deficit from \$3 billion to \$9.7 billion. This was a record year-over-year increase of something like 219%. In 1992-93 the NDP deficit rocketed to \$12.9 billion. To finance this additional debt, the NDP raised taxes once again in the middle of what they described at the time as the worst recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

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Let's go on to the 1993-94 budget, and I ask my PC caucus to bear with me during some of these troubled times. The 1993-94 NDP budget inflicted further damage to middle-income earners and an already weak economy. That budget contained \$2 billion in increased taxes and fees. This was the largest single tax grab in the history of Ontario. The provincial sales tax was broadened to cover

more consumer goods, discouraging consumer spending even further.

During the NDP term in office from 1990 to 1995 consumer confidence hit bottom as the deficit soared and record amounts of taxpayers' money went into government coffers. Taxes were high, businesses closed, jobs were lost. Deficit spending is shameful. There ought to be a law and under our government there will be.

With the introduction of Bill 15, the Harris government is returning these tax grabs to Ontarians. For many, these reductions translate into their first real wage increase in years.

High taxes truly kill jobs, undermine government revenue and slow economic growth. If high taxes created jobs, there would have been zero unemployment in Ontario during this Liberal-NDP era. If high taxes were good for revenues, we would have seen budget surpluses and no accumulated debt. The tax-and-spend decade very simply didn't work. Now things have changed: Taxes are down and, as a result, jobs are up.

As I've indicated, the last two governments in this province hiked taxes 65 times, including 11 personal income tax hikes. Our government has cut taxes 66 times. Consumers now have 66 reasons to spend money in Ontario, businesses now have 66 reasons to hire new employees and investors now have 66 reasons to put their money in our economy; 66 reasons why our economy is recovering faster than any other province from the recession we've been hearing about this afternoon.

Despite those huge tax hikes, the previous government didn't really increase the dollars it took in. The reason was simple. For most Ontario families, after you paid the bills and your rent or your mortgage, fixed your kids' teeth and bought your groceries, there was very little to contribute to government.

Unlike the past NDP and Liberal governments, which made it their priority to try and raise the revenue of the Ontario government, our goal is to raise the revenue of the average family in this province. With 66 tax cuts, people in Ontario can think about a new home or a new fridge or a stove or home repairs or a new car or that restaurant meal, for example. They can think about paying down credit cards. Many families now can afford to do these things.

Small businesses, retailers, store owners in my riding of Norfolk live and die by customers' ability to buy. These entrepreneurs are the backbone of our local economy and our provincial economy. Small business owners create the vast majority of the new jobs in our province. The problem was, previously, not enough people were buying. This concept of disposable income had been disposed of by government taxation.

It really is time that government let the people of this province keep more of what they earn, to get people spending again, to boost the consumer economy, to allow hardworking people to enjoy the fruits of their labour, to kickstart our economy — very simply, to create jobs.

It makes common sense in order to be competitive. We talk of suffering a brain drain. The question is, why do

people go to the United States? They don't necessarily go there for the bright lights or for social programs. In my mind, very clearly, people go south because the maximum income tax rate is half of ours and each dollar earned is worth at least 30% more.

Another reason why our government continues to cut provincial income taxes: It's good for the taxpayer, it's good for job creation and the economy, and it's good for our competitiveness. Most importantly, it's good for virtually everyone in Ontario.

If you include the GST and all the other taxes in Canada, every working person surrenders about 50 cents on the dollar to the state. In dual-income families, essentially one person works to support the government, and previous governments were not able to survive on that other half-dollar that was contributed on average by every family in Ontario. Previous governments borrowed on the assumption that our children and grandchildren could pay the debt.

To give credit where it is due, the last three Ontario budgets are not the only budgets to cut taxes in recent memory. In the early 1990s, the federal Tories cut taxes. But most provinces at that time, including Ontario, defeated the purpose by raising their own rates. Since then, Ottawa has been expanding what qualifies as taxable income, as well as increasing Canada pension and employment insurance premiums, which now have surpluses, very large surpluses. All the while, the federal government refuses its fair share for health care in Ontario which they are bound by law to do under the Canada Health Act.

All around the world, jurisdictions have been cutting taxes. Our trading partners and competitors already recognize the link between tax cuts and job creation. More than 50 countries, including most of the western industrialized nations, have lowered taxes on both individuals and businesses in recent years. The results have been real and impressive. Unemployment levels have fallen, private sector investment has increased, new jobs have been created and income levels have risen. And yet there are actually some people in Ontario who oppose tax cuts.

Bill 15 is a continuation of the direction set by this government to bring hope and prosperity back to Ontario. I personally would like to thank our Premier, Deputy Premier and my caucus colleagues for helping to restore this faith in Ontarians — faith in themselves and faith in the province.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): I am pleased to stand and comment on the member for Norfolk's speech.

The member for Norfolk mentioned that taxes are down and jobs are up, but it's funny. When we look at one sector, the sector that is the driving force behind the economy, which is construction, as of last week the construction industry had 22,000 fewer jobs than in 1997.

It's nice to say that the jobs are up, but I don't know where they are at the present time. Are they all those people who were on workfare who went to work for the municipalities for peanuts? I don't know if that's what it

is, but definitely at the present time in the gearing force of the economy, the construction industry, there are 22,000 fewer jobs than last year.

This afternoon at the press conference I attended given by the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, it was clear that there is real chaos at the present time. No municipalities will be able to issue tax bills. The Eastern Ontario District Health Council has, at the present time, had to call the municipality to get their bill paid. Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry were behind by \$477,200.

Municipalities don't have the money. They will have to go out and borrow the money, because they won't be able to send the bills to the taxpayers. Who will be paying at the end? It's all the municipal taxpayers.

This bill should be delayed. Like our leader, Dalton McGuinty, has said, it's too early to go ahead with this bill.

Mr Marchese: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe there is a quorum in the House. I have two minutes, and I want people to be in the House for those two minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary L. Leadston): Is there a quorum?

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

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The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: I appreciate having quorum in this House, because those two minutes are valuable. I wanted to respond to the member for Norfolk, who is a member of the same Tory choir. They all sing the same kind of song and I hear it each and every time from every member, and there are lots of them in this place.

He makes several points. He says, "We have accomplished our objectives of bringing income taxes down and we are accomplishing our task by balancing the budget." Those two notions are inconsistent with each other. It's an oxymoron. It's like dark light, in order for people to understand what an oxymoron is. You cannot at the same time say that you will reduce income taxes and then with the same breath say you're going to balance the budget. They're inconsistent with each other.

You've got to borrow \$5 billion from our pockets to give money back to those folks who don't need it. The member for Norfolk said that in the past the NDP said they would take money and give it away to interest groups. Isn't it abundantly obvious or discernible to you that when these people give billions of dollars away to those most wealthy Ontarians, is it not abundantly clear to you that that is one of the most obvious of the interest groups in this province, that that is a group of people who will profit in a way that is obscene? Do they not see that that interest group should be tempered somewhat, should be controlled, in terms of the money it makes? Of course that business community supports them. That's why we're against it.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): It's a pleasure to speak to this bill and the good and excellent comments

made by the member for Norfolk. Our government is carrying out the mandate we received in June 1995 to cut taxes and spend the money of the taxpayer more wisely. We want to let the private sector get on with creating jobs. Our government's plan is working.

As the finance minister underlined in the budget speech, Ontario's economy is booming. Our economy expanded by 4.8% in 1997 and private sector forecasters expect the province's economy to grow faster than any of the G-7 industrial nations over the next three years. The Ontario economy created 265,000 net new private sector jobs between February 1997 and February 1998. This was the largest number of jobs created in a 12-month period in this province's history. Overall 1998 promises to be one of the best years for job creation ever.

Our government promised the people of Ontario a 30% income tax cut over three years, and as a result of the first four steps the economy has performed better than expected, as we said in the Common Sense Revolution, issued in April 1994. As a result of these first four steps, we are going to be accelerating the last phase of the tax cut to July 1, 1998, for the betterment of the people of Ontario.

Mr Bradley: I am pleased to respond to the member's remarks in the House; a lot of cheerleading, as I would expect from my good friend, for what his government is doing. I want to ask him, however, how the people of his constituency feel about the increases in property taxes that will inevitably result, if not this year, next year or the year after, and how they react to the 247 tax increases this government has implemented since it has come to office.

Some people look puzzled as I say that. It's because I remember that during the last election campaign Mike Harris said that in fact a user fee was a tax, and if you either implemented a new user fee or increased a user fee, you were taxing the population. I have had some people go through your books and they have found that you have increased taxes 247 different times. You make reference to the other parties and so-called tax increases then. You have increased them far more.

What I worry about is that people of more modest income within the member's riding are in a difficult position because a user fee or a property tax increase does not take into account an individual's ability to pay. If that is not taken into account, then I believe those people are not better off with the tax decrease in terms of the income tax, which had to be borrowed, of course. The government had to borrow to make up for its spending requirements in the province.

Mr Barrett: I wish to thank my colleague from Cambridge for his comments. I think, as the member opposite indicated, we are guilty of singing from the same choir. We have a choir book, we have a plan. We have a plan for the future as well, and that is something I am not seeing coming from the members opposite.

The member for Fort York had some comments and referred back to the value of spending government money. Again, I just wish to remind the House that what really jump-started things for me was that first budget back in 1991, that budget where the NDP government promised to

spend its way out of the recession, not realizing that in Ontario we don't necessarily have a revenue problem. Certainly at that time we had a spending problem. That was a very bad year. That was the year, as I mentioned, that we saw a record year-over-year increase of 219%.

The member for St Catharines raised the issue of property taxes and I am very pleased to report — I mentioned earlier that my home town is Port Dover, which is located in the city of Nanticoke in the Haldimand-Norfolk region. The city of Nanticoke bit the bullet in 1990, has not raised taxes since 1990. That particular municipality has one of the lowest property tax rates in Ontario; not quite as low as the city of Brantford — there is some new information there — but considerably lower than many, the municipalities in Niagara, for example.

We can spend money. We can spend money on areas like health care and education, and the money we're spending on health care can certainly put the federal Liberals to shame.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate. The member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this debate. When you look at legislation, it's interesting, particularly the kind of bills the government brings forward. You find within some of the bills some supportable sections and some which are not. That's because we're seeing now more of a move toward omnibus bills, even omnibus tax bills.

Mr Baird: It's a budget bill.

Mr Bradley: The member for Nepean, who has been here a long time, is lecturing me, saying: "It's a budget bill. Don't you know? It's a budget bill." Thank you to the member for Nepean for once again correcting somebody in this House. We really appreciate it. I know your own members must appreciate that as well as I appreciate it.

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Nevertheless, what you're seeing is multiple considerations within one bill, which means that while you may find parts of the legislation supportable, you'll find other parts which are not. Of course, the hostage which is contained within this piece of legislation is the reference to gambling revenues. I don't know whether the government does it deliberately or not, but it includes it, for whatever reason, and makes the bill far less supportable than it might be otherwise.

The bill deals in one of its aspects with the income tax cut. In discussions even within the Conservative caucus and the Conservative party, considerable debate took place as to whether the income tax cuts would be implemented before the budget was balanced. In other words, what would be the target? I think every party in this Legislature wanted to see a move towards a balanced budget, and we heard all the parties say in the last election that there should be a balance budget.

Indeed, I well recall some of the cuts of the NDP Rae government, which I know did not want to cut in various areas — that was not what the government was about — but having to address the problem of increasing debt, felt there must be some cuts. For instance, the social contract

was implemented. That social contract abrogated every — I must say “every” — contract in the public service in Ontario. The sanctity of the collective agreement was always something I believed my friends in the trade union movement were very concerned about and when those contracts were abrogated, it was because the government was in a difficult financial circumstance and so took some pretty drastic action.

I know, for instance — it's on the public record — some people like Gary Carr, the member for Oakville South, Morley Kells, the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, and Ted Arnott, the member for Wellington, were all the kind of people who publicly, at some Conservative meetings, expressed apprehension about implementing a 30% income tax cut when the government was running a deficit because it meant in effect that because of that loss of revenue — according to the Dominion Bond Rating Service it was about \$4.8 billion a year fully implemented — the government would have to do two things. One was pay a higher interest rate. Right now the government's interest rate is the same as the Rae government's, AA-. It is not the AAA rating that was in existence in the late 1980s. That is one factor; they were paying more in interest than they otherwise might have to.

Second, they have to borrow the money for the tax cut.

I think what most members of the Conservative caucus who were thinking ahead would have preferred was that the government implement its tax cuts after the budget was balanced. For instance, the Saskatchewan government of Roy Romanow in its last budget had some tax cuts. The reason it had those tax cuts I think is because they have balanced the budget now in Saskatchewan and felt that when you have the budget in balance, when you're not battling with this accumulating debt, that is the time when you should implement tax cuts. Down the line, when our budget is eventually balanced, the tax cuts won't have the same kind of detrimental effect they have today.

I know that Conservative economists will tell you, for instance, that the combination of an income tax cut of 30% and drastic cuts in public spending actually have a contractionary effect on the economy. In other words, it may be the case today that the budget of this province could have been balanced this year, and indeed that the deficit wouldn't have been as high in other years, if the government hadn't proceeded so quickly and so drastically with its tax cut.

It would have been understandable if the government said, “Look, we're about tax cuts and we want to move in that direction.” If it had moved in a slower way, for instance, it would have found out that it would have lost less in the way of revenue. It would have had to borrow less money because, believe it or not, under a Conservative government — if I asked people out there, “What is a Conservative government about, a Mike Harris type of government?” they would have said, “Debt reduction.” They would have said, “Let's get rid of the deficit soon.” That's what they're about and that's fair enough. That was pretty clear that that's what they're about. That's why they were concerned when the gov-

ernment decided to implement an income tax cut before the budget was balanced.

In the national scene now, for instance, the federal government, now that it's in a position where it's in a surplus, has that ability to implement some tax cuts and to spend the dividend on programs which for a number of years have been reduced because of the desire to meet those fiscal obligations. So it has a contractionary effect. Virtually any economist will tell you this.

The chief economist for the Royal Bank and the chief economist for the Bank of Montreal both said the same thing. When you ask these people, “Why is Ontario's economy doing well?” — and I'm telling you I'm delighted that we're in a better position today in terms of the economy than we were, for instance, five years ago in the midst of a deep recession. There's nobody in this House who should not be delighted to see our whole country coming out of a recession. But the main reason is that our high interest rates are now low interest rates. Under Brian Mulroney, the Progressive Conservative Prime Minister of Canada, we had high interest rates, which discouraged business from expanding; it was more costly for business to expand as a result. Therefore, with the low interest rates, we find business expanding rather rapidly.

The second factor is the Canadian dollar. Talk to people in industry, the auto industry, for instance, which is doing very well now. They will tell you that the effect of the lower dollar is absolutely tremendous. People from Oakville and people from Oshawa and other places —

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: The member for Etobicoke-Humber interjects. I think he wants to remind me of something I mentioned in the House before, that I went to northwestern Ontario and talked to a vice-president in the pulp and paper industry who said that one percentage point on that dollar was worth \$17 million to that company.

So the lower dollar has had a major positive effect in terms of exports. It has some other problems, but at least in terms of exports it does help, and our economy is export-driven at this time.

The second thing we have to recognize is that south of the border the interest rates are very low and the economy is booming. Ontario more than any other province, by far more than any other province, has a trading relationship with the United States. Back in the late 1980s when the economy was doing well south of the border, the Liberal government of the day benefited from that by having a lot of economic activity in this province, much of it export-oriented but not all of it, not to the same extent as today.

People will ask, if it's so much the United States, what about British Columbia? Well, British Columbia deals more with the Asian market than it does with the United States market, compared to the province of Ontario, and therefore it's understandable.

We're delighted to see that we have improvement in our economy across this country, and to be parochial, I'm happy to see it in Ontario. I think there are many factors that contribute to it. One of those is not the tax cut. If you

have a tax cut, I suppose, with no spending cut, in recessionary times that may have some positive stimulus. It does not in these circumstances.

I go to conservative economists and that's what they tell me. One I always mention is Dr Joseph Kushner of Brock University, who, I have said in this House many times, has been referred to as Professor Negative or Dr No and Frosty the No-Man because he's a very conservative person when it comes to spending the tax dollar. It was Dr Kushner who introduced, at St Catharines city council, the motion asking the provincial government not to proceed with the income tax cut until such time as the budget was balanced in the province, and he's a very conservative economist.

I know there was debate within the Conservative caucus. I agree with Ted Arnott, the member for Wellington, in this regard, who cautioned against it. I don't want him to put this in his campaign literature, but I've found myself in agreement with Ted on a number of occasions. You always have to worry about how you word this, because I remember that Morley Kells one day put in his literature some complimentary remark I'd made. He took it a bit out of context; I didn't mind, because I like Morley Kells and I found it rather amusing. But that's why you have to watch in this House. You know how people say, "Why don't you people in opposition be more complimentary?" It's because when we are, I'll find it somewhere in the literature of my good friend the member for Niagara South if I happen to say something complimentary about his government. So I have to be cautious when I do that.

1700

So we've got the chief economists of the Bank of Montreal and the Royal Bank both saying that the factors I've mentioned are much more responsible than anything else for any improvement in the economy in the province of Ontario.

I mentioned as well, when the member for Norfolk was up, the effect of downloading. While we have an income tax cut — income tax does take into account a person's ability to pay — we're going to see increases in user fees at the local level or property taxes, but not necessarily in the first year, because desperate as they are, some councils, I think unwisely, frankly, are grabbing at the transitional funds. It's like the bait put out there: "Let's have some transitional funds."

I can tell you what the transitional funds are for: They're to tide this government over till its election. But come the time of the municipal election, I can assure you that the crunch will come for those municipalities. They'll have to cut services even further — and frankly they've done some real cutting already — or they'll have to increase the property tax, that does not take into account a person's ability to pay, or they'll have to increase user fees. As my good friend Mike Harris said on many occasions, a user fee is a tax. As I say, I've now counted — I can't remember whether it's 246 or 247 tax increases under the Mike Harris government. You know that health tax out there that nobody mentions? They even increase that tax from time to time. I think that might even be in

this budget, that you're going to see an increase in that. So there are some taxes out there.

I believe that wisdom would have dictated that you be cautious, that you proceed with caution when you want to implement that policy. If you wanted to implement your tax break, the best time to have done it is when you had the provincial budget balanced.

One of the problems in this is the gambling revenues. I know that among the Conservative non-cabinet people, and even some in the cabinet, there's a lot of angst about these so-called charity casinos. They're called the Mike Harris gambling halls in many communities. Jack McNie, a former Conservative cabinet minister from Hamilton, is leading the charge in Hamilton against these. I can't speak for Jack, but I would think he'd be concerned about a number of the policies of the Mike Harris government, because he comes from a more moderate area, the Robarts and Davis era, which was a more moderate Conservative Party in this province, one which probably represented a balanced view of the province much better than the present government. He recognizes very well what's happening with these charity casinos.

You see, the word "charity" is put there as a front. They're using charities as a front out there to make it sound as though they're beneficial, when really what the charity casinos are about is drawing money like a vacuum cleaner, drawing the discretionary funds to be spent in a community from that community. If you're running the Canadian Tire store or another business that some members might be involved in, you're going to find that the people won't have as much discretionary money to spend in other businesses as they would otherwise.

While you might have a casino in Windsor or Niagara Falls which are tourist destinations, where over 50% of the people are coming from outside that area, probably from the United States in most of the cases, what you'll have with the charity casinos are local folks there. Who will be there? People have told me — and I don't say this in a condescending way at all; I say it in a way of lamenting it — that very often if you go into a casino of this nature and look at who's there, you will say to yourself, "That's who should not be there," because they tend to prey upon vulnerable, desperate people in our society, addicted people.

Mr Ford: Have you been in there, Jim?

Mr Bradley: I have not been in one.

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): Then it's hearsay.

Mr Bradley: If the member from Belleville wishes to defend charitable casinos, that's his business. I will not defend them. I suspect many of your colleagues in the Conservative caucus are deeply concerned and worried about the effect of the new Mike Harris gambling halls, the charity casinos, on their communities, because they're not tourist destinations. In fact, in this House we've been talking about how the people in Niagara Falls are looking for more than just their tourist destination casino. They want to see other tourist attractions in there. So do I. Many of us were disappointed when we saw the winning bid not having as many of those components as all of us

would like to see, because all of us in the Niagara region — any area — would like to see people come to an area where there are a lot of tourist attractions. I worry about that.

The provincial government was under a lot of fire over VLTs. They said, "Well, the focus of attention is on these electronic slot machines, so we can get out of it. We desperately need the money," despite the fact that Mike Harris said in this House and during the election campaign, as did Ernie Eves, two good Conservatives out there, "We don't want anything to do with these gambling revenues." They said that, and you know something? I applauded them in the House when they said that. I was in agreement. I was thumbs-up when Mike Harris and Ernie Eves said they were against this kind of gambling revenue.

Yet we find them out now, the government, coercing municipalities, bribing municipalities by saying, "Look, we'll give you these administrative funds, and it could be worth \$200,000 to you." But, you know, it's blood money. It's money which is going to be taken from the social fabric of this province if they accept it. A lot of pressure is put on. They go to the charities and say, "You know, you're not going to get any money." I remember the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Al Leach, one day was kind of warning: "Those charities better watch out. If their municipalities don't approve it, they're not going to get the money."

What's happening with governments all across this country expanding gambling opportunities is that the Lions Club and the Optimist Club and the Rotary Club and so on, who might hold an event of some kind or might have their local small bingo, are finding that those funds are drying up, so they are going to come knocking on the door of government for different kinds of funds.

I think it's a move in the wrong direction. I don't think you should ever say that your health care or your social services or your education should depend on revenues which are uncertain. As we know, our American friends are going to be getting into the lottery business in a very big way.

I mentioned there are some aspects of this bill which are supportable, which I think are good. On the extension for the first-home buyers, the credit that is available to them, we sent a letter across saying: "That's a good idea. Why don't you do it?" We're happy to see that in the budget. When you can help out in certain ways the small business community so they can thrive, because they can produce a lot of jobs, I think that's supportable as well.

The main concern I have with the final implementation of this income tax cut is that you don't have your budget balanced, so you are going to have to borrow more money and you are going to have to maintain deep cuts. I think you should at least postpone it. For your government to postpone it would have been wise, or to forget about it, but you are going to proceed with it.

I look at this bill and other bills and I worry about the effect on local communities. I worry that governments right across this country are becoming so addicted to gambling revenues that it's going to be hard to wean them

off it. The Rev Derwyn Shea from west Toronto asked, "If you get these casinos up and going, will the next government be able to stop them?" That's the fear. That's why we need you now, in the government benches, to say, "Look, Mike Harris, let's stop this." Because you know what they'll do? I'll tell my friend from Etobicoke-Humber what they'll do. They'll sign eight-year or 10-year contracts which would cost millions of dollars to get out of.

That's why I look for his help and the help of other members I know must be uneasy about this policy to help out those of us in the opposition and opponents of this escalation of gambling. Help us out and try to put a stop to this now.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I want to thank the member for St Catharines for his remarks. There's one thing that we can always say: He's very consistent when he is making those remarks, especially when he talks about the revenues from casino gambling and how they are supporting, by and large, this government's agenda. But the one thing that he did talk about, and this is something I think all governments of all stripes agree on, is that we should be moving towards a balanced budget.

1710

All governments have that intention in mind. However, there are times when you just can't predict accurately that your revenues are going to go down the way they did in the early 1990s and, contrary to what my friends in the Conservative benches say, it wasn't a spending problem. Revenues were going down to catastrophic levels. It really makes you wonder as well why this government is having a 30% tax cut when there's a deficit. It just doesn't make any sense, and that's something that the member mentioned.

There are tax cuts and cuts to spending on programs as well, programs like health care and education, and the member pointed out that there are many who will say that is really contractionary; that's actually going to reduce the vibrancy of an economy rather than increase it. But it's not just the member who's saying that. Listen to what the bond raters are saying. They are saying that the Tories are finally up to the level that the NDP were at when it comes to the ratings by the bond raters. That's what they think of your actions.

He talked about what the real reasons are for the expansion of the economy. But the question I have for the member is whether, after listening to that, he likes the tax cut or not, and what a Liberal government would do if they were in place.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Wentworth North.

Applause.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): Thank you very much. I'm not sure if that applause is good or bad, but I have to agree with the previous member, who indicated that the member for St Catharines is always consistent, because he always is.

Ever since 1995 when I got here, he has been saying you have to borrow money for the tax cut, and he keeps saying that even though that submission is not based on fact at all. I refer him to page 53 of the Ontario budget where the actual revenue numbers for personal income tax are. Actual in 1994-95 is close to \$15 billion. Then after we took over and the tax cut started, the actual amount of revenues out of personal income tax rose. We didn't have to borrow any money to pay for the tax cut. In fact, we made money on the tax cut, which is consistent with all of history when tax cuts get too high.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Is that the kind of math that you guys do?

Mr Skarica: The opposition is now clamouring because it's the truth, it's right there in black and white. After the first set of tax cuts our revenues went up \$5 billion and after the next set of tax cuts in 1996-97, they went up by another billion dollars. So as our tax cuts started to be implemented, in fact were increasing, so were our revenues. It's a simple fact that we stimulated the economy.

Why is there a concern about the deficit? The reason that the deficit isn't eliminated is in fact, if you look at the program expense, we're now spending more money than when we took over because we've increased the amount of money we spend on education and health care. We're spending more money in those areas than any other government in history. So what the member for St Catharines said is just not factual. We're making money on the tax cut and we're spending more money than ever on health and education. Those are the facts.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I'm quite pleased to say a couple of words on the presentation made by my colleague the member for St Catharines. Yes, indeed, when Mr Bradley gets up, we can all look to him to give us always the best out of any particular document that is introduced in this House. Today is no exception. He has given, even though briefly, an in-depth description of what the document was.

Let me say, with all due respect, that the government must be terribly disappointed with the way business is going for the government. Otherwise, they would have been introducing a much better budget than they did. I can't help it, but since the Minister of Health is in the House, I can see the budget was introduced, which was no budget whatsoever because it was nothing but a hash and rehash of the announcements they made over the last three years.

Then we get the big announcement two or three days later by the Premier and the Minister of Health, saying, "We are going to put \$1.2 billion," and they repeated that very slowly, very clearly, and then very hushedly, they said "over eight years." Can you believe that? This must be a terrible disappointment for the government and the members when their own Premier and the Minister of Health say, "We're going to be putting in there \$1.2 billion in eight years." Why don't they say loudly what the budget should have been saying for the poor, the homeless, the sick, the students, the seniors? There's nothing in

the budget for those people, and they must be terribly disappointed, and I am surprised really to see any members of the House that could not agree with that.

Mrs Boyd: It's always a pleasure to have an opportunity to respond to the speech of the member for St Catharines and to congratulate him on his great success in drawing the absolute nonsense out of the government members that we just heard from the member for Wentworth North.

I understand the member for Wentworth North is taking a course on financial planning. I also know that he's a lawyer, and I must say, with that kind of mathematical genius, selective reading of the figures in the budget, I'd be very nervous of entrusting him to tell me what the appropriate thing was that I should invest in. I must say that when the bond raters say one thing and the financial planner from Wentworth North says another, I'll take the bond raters, believe it or not, any day.

The reality for Ontario is exactly as the member for St Catharines said. This government continues to borrow more money than it takes in, even though it has decimated services in many parts of our communities, even though it has cut the assistance to those who are most vulnerable, even though it is closing hospitals and closing schools as a result of its policies.

This is a government that could easily have achieved a balanced budget if it were not for a 30% tax cut. This is a government that cannot escape the reality that it continues to spend more than it takes in, and it doesn't like to be reminded of that. It likes to pretend that the deficit does not exist, and they really resent the fact that the member for St Catharines keeps reminding them that they're financing this province on the backs of the poorest through casino gambling.

Mr Bradley: I appreciate the comments of the members for Windsor-Riverside, Wentworth North, Yorkview and London Centre. It's a good option to have available, to have this response. I want to say that I particularly like those who agreed with me in this case, so I have to mention my friend from Wentworth North as being in a bit of disagreement. What I want to say to him is that he would have found that the revenues would have been even more substantial for the government and he would have seen a diminishing of the deficit.

I'm not talking about Liberal economists. I'm talking about the most conservative people. When you have on St Catharines city council a person who is called Frosty the No-Man, who is noted as the most conservative person you'll ever find in terms of government expenditures, putting forward a motion asking the government not to implement its 30% income tax until such time as there's a balanced budget, then you know what economists are saying about this, and when you have the economists from the Royal Bank and the Bank of Montreal — these are not raving socialists; my friends in the NDP will tell you these are people who are pretty cautious in their approach to the economy and they're all saying basically the same thing.

I appreciate as well the member for London Centre's underlining once again the fact that gambling revenues are

something that governments are getting all too used to. I'm not overly partisan on this. It's right across the country, and I just think all of us have to stop and say: "Enough is enough. Let's call a moratorium on it." We're not going to close down what you've got there in Niagara Falls or Windsor. I don't think you're going to see that happen, but let's pause and take a good look at this. Let's see what we're really doing. Is it really worth the price, tearing at that social fabric of Ontario? I suspect most of us think it's not. We have to persuade the most powerful people, the Premier and the Treasurer, of that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

1720

Mr Lessard: It's a pleasure to be able to participate in the debate with respect to Bill 15, the next instalment in the Tory tax scheme. However, having said that — I just wanted to let you know, Speaker — I had expected to participate in a debate on Bill 16 this afternoon, the Tory closure motion on the property assessment tax overhaul, the fundamentally flawed fourth attempt, the fourth go-round, to deal with the changes to the property tax assessment. We know that is a bill that really deserves some further debate, but they were going to shut that debate down this afternoon. We're happy that they decided not to do that and to have a closer look at what the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers is saying to them about how flawed even this fourth attempt to fix up their mistakes has been.

In my office, I got hundreds of letters from people who work in stores in malls and in restaurants who are very concerned about what the Tory tax bills are going to do to their business. They're fearful of what this government is going to do when it comes to their tax changes, because they see what the Tory tax scheme has meant over the past three years. What it has meant is that there is a break for those who are the most well-off, and with Bill 16 that continues to be the case. If you own a large bank building downtown, you'll get a break on your taxes. Even in the government's press releases related to this, in the back-grounder materials its says, "Commercial and industrial property taxes cut by half a billion dollars."

Who are the people who own commercial and industrial property in Ontario? It's not people like me or the member for London Centre, that's for sure. We know who those people are. We might call them a special interest group. The people with a lot of money: That's the special interest group that the Tories seem to cater to on a regular basis. We know that when they're appealing to their special interest group, the people who are going to suffer are residential taxpayers in cities like Windsor and London and in other towns across Ontario, people who are seniors on fixed incomes, people who have seen user fees go up now having to pay for prescription medication that they didn't have to pay for in the past.

I've received letters from seniors who had been receiving colostomy supplies from the Victorian Order of Nurses for years and years who have seen those supplies being cut off by the community care access centre.

They're going to find it increasingly difficult to pay those increased property taxes.

Students who are attending university, or their parents, are finding that their tuition fees are going to go up by ever-increasing amounts, adding to their debt load. This government likes to preach that they don't like deficits. Meanwhile, they're just transferring those deficits on to the backs of students and their parents.

Other groups that are losing when we see this government catering to their special interest friends are the working poor. People who have been able to benefit from the Ontario drug benefit plan are going to see those benefits cut off. That's the price they're having to pay. Also, those who are on social assistance had a 20% cut in the benefits available to them in 1995. So we know who benefits when this government puts in place their tax scheme and who ends up paying the price for that.

In the city of Windsor, I received a letter from people who have been involved very deeply in health care issues. In fact, we have a health system labour advisory committee. Two of the people who are involved in that are Parina DeBellis and Valerie Walter. They've sent me a letter about what the Tory tax scheme means as far as the quality of health care in the city of Windsor is concerned, how that is affected by the Tory tax scheme. They talk about the downsizing of long-term mental health services in the London and St Thomas area. We're seeing that those mental health patients are coming back to communities like Windsor, and that's something that we agree with. But what we also agree with is that there have to be services available in the community to serve people who require those services in our community. But you know what? The government says they can't afford to provide those services in the city of Windsor, so persons who are relocating as a result of the closure of beds in St Thomas and London are coming to our community without those supports within them.

There are waiting lists for up to two years for children who need mental health services as well.

I met with several representatives recently from the Canadian Mental Health Association. They're quite concerned about the status of mental health reform under this government. They have asked me to use my influence to try and bring to the attention of this government what mental health reform means to them and how the need for transitional dollars for mental health services is critical so that we can develop supports in our community which are necessary to deal with the proposed closure of psychiatric hospitals and the downsizing of beds.

In the Windsor-Essex area we've been historically underfunded when it comes to mental health services. This is a government that says, "We don't have the money to provide those services, but we're going to close those hospitals," and basically says to people in our community, "You deal with the problem now; you're going to be faced with it."

We're also seeing many gaps in the health care system. This government likes to say they're actually increasing the spending on health and likes to lead you to believe that

things are getting better with respect to health care. I know in my community people disagree with that.

One of my constituents, Donna Longmoore, provided me with a letter recently from Canadian Tire. You wonder, how does this relate to health care? This is what they're selling. This letter says, "Protect yourself from gaps in your hospital coverage and from unexpected hospital bills, plus get your health questions answered whenever you want."

This is a benefit that's being sold by Canadian Tire to deal with the gaps that are being caused by the Tory government in health care services. These are the people who are going to be providing those services that were traditionally government-funded — Canadian Tire. You apply for additional health care coverage to cover those gaps that are being created by this government. That's the sort of direction the Tory tax scheme is taking us towards. We say that's just the wrong direction.

Last week I had a round-table meeting, during constituency week, with persons who are providing services to those who are developmentally disabled. They were quite concerned about the contents of the document Making Services Work for People. Once again, those who are very vulnerable feel threatened by the actions of this government. This is a document that they refer to as not making services work for people but making people work for services, because increasingly they're finding that the services are being cut. They're measuring the services that are being provided by the minute, not by the results they're accomplishing for people. We see that as a move towards increasing institutionalization of persons with developmental disabilities and not a decrease.

It also is opening the door to privatization of services, because we know they're reducing the funding for services for persons with developmental disabilities, and the people who provide those services aren't going to be able to provide them with the funds that they have available.

This government likes to take credit for increasing the economic prosperity in the province. We in Windsor are lucky that we are leading the way with respect to increased prosperity. Family income grew in Windsor by almost 5%. More people are working in Windsor than ever before. The reason is, that economic rebound is increasing sales in the auto sector, the value of the Canadian dollar, the increased exports to the United States. I should tell you that the increase took place between 1990 and 1995, when an NDP government was investing in communities like Windsor.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member from Muskoka.

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): Questions and comments, Mr Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: Yes.
1730

Mr Grimmett: I have been listening to the member for Windsor-Riverside and had the opportunity as well to see some of the comments made by the member for St Catharines and the member for London Centre. I also saw the comments of the member for Wentworth North. I

thought it was an interesting debate and philosophical discussion about tax cuts. There has been quite a bit of talk on the budget about the philosophy of cutting taxes. I heard some comments that no economist in the world will support the idea of cutting taxes to try to reduce the deficit. I just want to report to the House that I did a little digging and I did find an economist who has a comment on this issue.

Mr Baird: A neo-conservative?

Mr Grimmett: I'll tell you who the economist is later, but I just want to read a bit. Some of the language is a little archaic, but if you follow this closely I think you will learn something.

"Nor should the argument seem strange that taxation may be so high as to defeat its object, and that, given sufficient time to gather the fruits, a reduction of taxation will run a better chance than an increase of balancing the budget."

He goes on to say that it's really like a manufacturer who is losing money and decides to raise his prices. And, of course, that's what the NDP did. They raised their taxes and got less revenue. We've lowered our taxes and we're getting more revenue.

Mr Baird: Is that a neo-con?

Mr Grimmett: It is a guy named John Maynard Keynes.

Mr Baird: What?

Mr Grimmett: John Maynard Keynes, the great deficit economist and the person who is often quoted by both the Liberal Party and the NDP. The last time this was taken out of the U of T library was 1958.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I listened fairly intently to the member for Windsor-Riverside and he does have a number of good points. I am just surprised at the activity of the members of the Conservative Party. I want to ask them a question in connection with the member for Windsor-Riverside, and that is, is it not true that you have increased the provincial debt by how many millions since you have come into power?

Mr Lalonde: Billions.

Mr Ruprecht: Right. It isn't just millions, my friend, that you've increased the provincial debt, because on the one hand you're saying, "We'll promise them tax cuts and we're going to promise to do them early and we're going to make some promises that we're going to keep," that mantra. Yet we're asking the question directly to you. Have you or have you not increased the provincial debt? What is your answer going to be? Yes. And the next question is this: By how much has the provincial debt increased since you have taken office?

Mr Sergio: Eleven billion dollars.

Mr Ruprecht: No, it is not \$11 billion. It is \$16 billion. That's what it is. Not \$11 billion.

Mr Sergio: I thought it was \$11 billion.

Mr Ruprecht: Let's get the facts straight. I am glad — when it's my turn I'm going to ask some more pertinent questions to you and I am very happy you are about to wake up, because now you have woken up to the fact of what you have really done to the provincial economy.

Of course, the member earlier had indicated that, yes, there has been some positive feedback and, yes, there have been some new jobs created. There's no doubt about that. We can read it in the paper. But at the same time, my friends, let's be clear. The provincial debt has increased.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Things were going rather smoothly.

I recognize the member for London Centre.

Mrs Boyd: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and certainly there is no question that the member from High Park can get things livened up later on in the afternoon on a Wednesday afternoon.

I want to congratulate my colleague from Windsor-Riverside. I know he was looking forward to being able to more thoroughly discuss this bill, but of course, as you may have noticed, under the new rules the time limit was changed for his speech to 10 minutes, leaving very little time for him to go into detail about his concerns around this bill. He did a very fine job of talking about the concerns that are there, a very fine job of describing why the people of Ontario are becoming very sceptical about the claims of this government.

We know this government likes to ignore the fact that the economic climate of the times, the kind of economy that is operating particularly in the United States, but certainly the global economy, which they are most happy to talk about at any other time, has a great effect on the economic health of Canada and of Ontario. It's very clear that the government likes to take credit for the change in economic times that has come about worldwide, certainly in the United States, that is propping up the revenues of this government.

When the members opposite, as the member for Windsor-Riverside tried to suggest, say it is their tax cut that has made the difference in terms of tax revenues, every economist can show that is not the major factor, that interest rates and the quality of the economy in the United States is a major issue.

Mr Baird: I want to comment on the philosophy of my colleague the member for Windsor-Riverside. He went into quite a long rant about taxation policy. We on this side of the House remember the previous NDP government. They raised taxes, increased the levels of taxation on families in Ontario, and they brought in less money.

In fact I would even agree with the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, the Liberal Party finance critic, Mr Phillips, when he said in the early 1990s that this \$4-billion tax increase was going to kill 100,000 jobs. Regrettably, we waited and we found out he was right. The NDP's tax increases did kill jobs. What did we say? We said in opposition that those tax increases were wrong, that they were hurting middle-class families, and that if were given the great privilege and honour of forming a government, we would give that money back to the taxpayers, to those people who worked for it.

That money is not the government's money. That's the taxpayers' money. Some of our friends opposite like to take the view that somehow we have a 100% taxation

system and the government just chooses once a year to allow people to keep some of their money. We on this side of the House take the exactly opposite view, that it's the people's money. It's their money and it's always their money. The government should take some amount of money to help pay for public expenditures, but it is the people's money. That is something that is extremely important.

I suppose we could have said that deficit reduction was more important than job creation, but we on this side of the House listened to the people of Ontario when they spoke out very loudly and clearly and said the top priority for their government should be job creation, should be trying to deal with the unemployment problem in the country and with the problems of poverty. Under the member's government we saw a tremendous increase. Child poverty doubled under the NDP government. We want to create jobs, get more families working, get more people contributing to the prosperity of the province.

Mr Lessard: I'd like to thank the members for Parkdale, London Centre, Nepean and one riding I didn't make a note of for their comments on my very abbreviated speech, abbreviated as a result of the Tory rules changes that restrict our ability to speak as openly and as often and as long as we would like, as really is necessary on many of these bills.

I want to thank the member for Parkdale as well, for pointing out the fact that notwithstanding the Tory economic policy and their objective to try and reduce the deficit, the provincial debt has increased during the time they've been in government. We're having to borrow the money to cover that increasing debt cost.

The member for London Centre mentioned that people are very sceptical of the claims that are being made by this province and pointed out quite rightly that a big part of the prosperity we're enjoying here in Ontario is a result of a very healthy economy in the United States, the value of the dollar and the tremendous increase in exports that we've experienced over the last few years.

The member for Nepean said the NDP were raising taxes and therefore revenues went down as a result, and completely ignored any of the things I said about user fees that are having to be absorbed by students, by seniors and by the working poor. Their leader, when he was over on this side of the Legislature, said that a user fee is the same as a tax, but I guess that was then and this is now and increasing user fees is okay.

To follow the member for Nepean's arguments to absurdity, he'd like us to believe that we should have a 100% tax reduction and therefore jobs will be created by the hundreds of thousands and we'll all be better off.

1740

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Rollins: It gives me great pleasure to rise today and speak in support of Bill 15, An Act to cut taxes for people and for small business and to implement other measures contained in the 1998 Budget.

Mr Gerretsen: How about those gas prices?

Mr Rollins: We had a look at the gas prices last week, member for Kingston and The Islands, and it was fairly successful. We managed to keep the price of gas down.

Applause.

Mr Rollins: Thank you. Thanks for the gas prices. I might say that in eastern Ontario we were pleased with a decrease in price, a little bit of a decrease. The presidents of one of the oil companies said that one of the reasons the gas price went down —

Mr Gerretsen: It's because you guys were watching them.

Mr Rollins: No, no, it was because of the competition pressure. I asked him when I was talking to him on the phone, how is he going to answer the competition to put the gas back up, but he didn't want to talk about that.

You people always want to grab this book out here and you always want to read it real quick. You always talk about the tax cut and what it's costing. I would like to bring out a little point about Frontenac county: When the tax cut is implemented, it's \$51.5 million to Frontenac county. I would like the member from Frontenac to tell me what other activity he has done in Frontenac county that will generate \$51.5 million to the pockets of the taxpayers of that municipality? In my riding in Hastings county, it amounts to \$39 million. That's the money going back to the taxpayers, that's what makes this economy go.

Another thing you people get all upset about is who gets the rich tax cut.

Mr Gerretsen: I don't call you "you people." Be careful.

Mr Rollins: The people from the other side of the fence, then, okay? The taxpayers who earn between \$25,000 and \$75,000 a year get 64% of the tax cut, which amounts to about \$3 billion a year. Those are, I would think, in the middle-income class of the people of eastern Ontario and all around Ontario.

Mr Gerretsen: How much do they get apiece?

Mr Rollins: Just figure it out, John, it wouldn't be hard. If you want to figure it out, if you're making \$60,000, it ends up about \$3,000 a year when it's all completed. Maybe that isn't any amount of money that you have to worry about, but I know a lot of people who like \$60 a week. It doesn't hurt a bit.

Certainly the economy is expanding. We've had 4.8% in 1997. There is no question that the growth projected for 1998 is about 4%. We're supposed to be the fastest growing economy in all the G-7 industrial countries. Consumer confidence has risen by about 10% in 1998 already. Housing starts increased by about 25.6% in 1997; business building permits have risen by 32%.

Mr Gerretsen: In Belleville?

Mr Rollins: In my riding of Quinte there has been a fair amount of improvement. One of the things that's happened is a recent commercial development of a new Denny's restaurant, 6,000 square feet, just opened the last month or so. Recently completed was a free-standing eight-screen Famous Players complex at the mall. That also will be part of the Cambridge moneys that are being put in that they announced of about \$31 million to be

spent. That road, when you go by and Highway 62 crosses, if you just look to the right and you see the Belleville sign, you will see it being put up. That's the place there. That's where you stop in and get your milkshakes from Reid's Dairy every once in a while.

Mr Gerretsen: That's the piece of the 401 that's in really bad shape.

Mr Rollins: Yes, that's the same one.

Mr Gerretsen: You've got to slow down there because of the potholes.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, I'd appreciate some decorum here. Also, you're not in your seat, member.

Please continue, member for Quinte.

Mr Rollins: Halla Climate Control has expanded 100,000 square feet. They've just announced that and they're going to hire another 200 people. That's not bad news for our riding of Quinte. The commercial and industrial developments that I've just mentioned in my riding in Quinte alone are the indicators that this government is doing what is right.

I look out of the windows of this place right here. I can tell you, when we came here three years ago — and you can look out any one of these windows — it was hard to find any construction going on. There weren't cranes. I defy you to look out any window in this building today from the fourth floor and you will see those cranes and those developments. I think that's the kind of economy that this province needs. It's the kind of jobs that it needs.

When that tax cut goes back to the province of Ontario — and I hope the member for Fort York is listening — that amounts to about \$1,120,000,000 for the city of Toronto. I don't know where that money will be spent, but I do believe that it will make the cash registers in all our communities ring a little bit louder and make the business world a little bit better place to be in.

I know that the target to balance the budget we're reasonably in control of and in the right direction for. We've dropped it down to about \$4.2 billion. It's \$0.6 billion lower than the deficit target we started out with last year, and I know the budget will be balanced by the year 2000-01.

Creating jobs through tax cuts: The Ontario economy is getting close to 400,000 new jobs already. Now that's not far off of it. It's starting to be over halfway where we needed to be in the Common Sense Revolution when we said that we would produce some 725,000 new jobs. It's pushing on in the bottom half of it. I know at the start there was a lot of noise in here that we weren't going to make it, but it might just happen.

The unemployment rate in March dropped down to 7.4%, and the good news came out yesterday. April's numbers show us that it's 7.2%. We're leading Canada, and Ontario is once again becoming the driving force to make this country a great place to do business in.

The small business tax rebate: When we listened in the finance committee, we heard businessmen after businessman come in and talk to us and say, "One of the things that we are being overtaxed with" — and one of the things

that the minister has done in bringing in the new budget is to make sure that there's a starting down, cutting back the small business tax, because those people need to have that kind of consideration. This year it's down a half per cent and eight years from now we will have it down by half of what it is today. Those business people were very thankful for that.

One of the other concerns that we have for small business people is the banks. They all keep telling us that they're doing a great job. We have a lot of concern for small business. When they talk about small business, they talk about people that are under \$3 billion or \$4 billion. I'm talking about the person who needs the \$5,000 job. I'm talking about the fellow who needs \$10,000, the very small business. Those are the kinds of things I think we've got to encourage the banks to be able to support those small businesses, because we know those small businesses produce the mass number of jobs in Ontario.

One of the other problems we've had is under the taxation. I know in Hastings county our commercial and business taxes were about 17% above the Ontario average. Due to the numbers in the budget, the minister has given us the opportunity to put over \$1 million savings over eight years to get those taxes for education on commercial and industrial businesses back down to where they should be so that the people are doing that business and keeping them going and it will work well.

Investing in jobs for the future: In the budget Minister Eves announced a \$500-million fund to support leading-edge R&D. This is something that we that are in education, that those universities and colleges need all that good work to be able to get that learning research to be developed in our country, and also it will help our colleges and universities out.

Jobs in agriculture: With the grant that we had from the Minister of Agriculture, rural jobs in Ontario.

1750

These are all things that are helping work extremely well to make sure that this government's commitments are met, that we balance the budget by the year 2000-01 and that we can support our people and make sure that our children and our grandchildren will have jobs and work to do in this community.

The big thing is we've cut income tax down, we've got it to the last stage where we promised we'd cut, we've seen the increase in those jobs and we've seen the increase in our budget. As long as those moneys keep rolling in, we know we're on the right track.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Ruprecht: I listened to the member for Quinte very carefully, and I say this to him: Nobody said you were totally wrong, and furthermore, nobody said your tax cut is totally wrong. But the question that surely must be asked is this: At what time should the tax cut be implemented, and at what price? Surely it is obvious to the people of Ontario that a tax cut should click in after the budget has been balanced, because otherwise you are borrowing against your tax cuts.

That, of course, as the member for Yorkview said quite clearly, would hurt and cause havoc among those in our population who are poor, who are homeless, the seniors, the sick, the disabled, and he also mentioned the students. They will have to bear the brunt of these tax cuts. Is it not true, are you not in the process of raising education tuition fees to such a level that it will become almost impossible for an ordinary person to send their son or daughter to school? Is that not true? I hear nothing on the other side. Again, it's a question of, "I see nothing, I hear nothing and I speak nothing," when the truth is being said.

Furthermore, let's have a look at these tax cuts that you're pronouncing as the most beautiful thing since sliced bread. What happened here? You chose to fire over 10,000 nurses. You plan to close over 35 hospitals. You've made deep cuts in the classroom. You've denied 60,000 four-year-olds the benefit of junior kindergarten. In fact, where you have cut and sliced and slashed, we know there's no room for poor, homeless, sick and students. That is the truth of it.

Mrs Boyd: I'd like to refer to the last sentence of the member's speech, where he said, "As long as the money keeps rolling in, everything's going to be fine." The problem is, as we well know, the money doesn't keep rolling in. We saw a Liberal government between 1985 and 1990 which made the same assumption you're assuming: that the money would keep rolling in, that the economy would keep on having the kind of return that it had.

As we all discovered, the economy was fickle and that was not the case. When the money doesn't keep rolling in, when there's a recession, governments need to take action to protect their citizens from the effects of that recession. That was the situation we were in in 1990 to 1995, and that's the situation, unfortunately, that if history continues to show the same economic cycles that it has in the past, the next government is likely to face as well.

Sure, as long as the economy is boiling along, as it appears to be now, all is well. But all it takes is a little downturn to begin to turn that whole situation around, to put a government in quite a different position than you find yourselves in now or than the Liberals imagined themselves to be in in 1989-90.

The Asian flu gave us all a little hint of what would happen to this globalized economy if that kind of downturn began. We all need to be very cautious about the claims that we make about the mechanisms, the levers that we have on the economy, and whether we can be sure they will continue to let the money roll in, as the member suggested.

Mr Baird: I want to congratulate my colleague the member for Quinte on his remarks. The member for Quinte brings a unique perspective to this place because he has run a small business, and he always adds a terrific amount to our discussions as a caucus with respect to small business. He, like I and my caucus colleagues, knows the importance of small business to the Ontario economy and knows the importance of small business to job creation. When we look at the jobs created in Ontario

since 1995, going from 19,000 jobs to 825,000 jobs projected by the year 2000, we know that small business is driving —

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): You did all that?

Mr Baird: The member for Lake Nipigon asks, did we do all that? No. Small business has been doing 82% of the job creation and that is indeed good news.

Mr Pouliot: A buck an hour, 60 hours a week?

Mr Baird: The honourable member opposite doesn't want to hear the good news. They don't want to hear about the jobs the economy has been creating. They don't want to hear that unemployment in Ottawa-Carleton has fallen to below 7.4%. They don't want to hear that good news, but the honourable member for Quinte told them about it.

He also highlighted the impact of the tax cut in his community, in Hastings, for the people of Belleville and Trenton, and the effect that is having on small businesses in eastern Ontario. It's beginning to help create consumer confidence. Consumers themselves are going back out into the community and spending money and creating jobs. It's not the government creating jobs; it's hardworking consumers creating jobs — the honourable member for Quinte very accurately identified that — as are the provisions in Bill 15 to cut the corporate tax for small business in half over the next eight years, to make it as easy as possible.

Mr Gerretsen: Eight years.

Mr Pouliot: Eight years.

Mrs Boyd: Eight years.

Mr Baird: They spent 10 years raising taxes, and we'll spend eight years cutting that tax, because we know, as does the member for the Quinte, that small business is the economic engine in the province.

Mr Gerretsen: First of all, it ought to be said that I don't think there's a member in the House here who doesn't want to see a buoyant economy. We would all like to see a buoyant economy. We would all like to see as many people working as possible. We would all like to see people being productive and having a positive outlook towards life etc.

I find it interesting that at one moment the government members are saying that all this is happening because of the tax cut, and then the next member gets up and says, "Of course, you know the tax cut, whatever we cut here in Ontario, it has been increased federally." If that's the case, there has been a neutral effect on people's salaries and wages. That's certainly what I'm hearing from most people. If that is so, how can you say the tax cut is a positive force in the economy when in effect you are, on the other hand, saying that whatever money is being given back by the province is being taxed back by the federal government? That's the first point I want to make.

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: I hear the minister of privatization rambling on. We wonder what he's doing in his office on a day-to-day basis. When you think about it, we haven't seen any of the proposals that presumably he was appointed for.

Mrs Boyd: Thank God.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank God, yes. There are some of them we don't want to see.

Why doesn't the government just say, "We promised that we were going to privatize this, that and the other thing, we're not going to do it," and let's be done with it. Hand the limo keys back and become another back-bencher.

Finally, though, I think it ought to be said that all of us on all sides of the House want to see a buoyant economy, but let's be a little bit careful as to who should take credit for it. Maybe the credit should go to the American economy, maybe to the feds, maybe to the province or maybe to a combination of all those forces.

Mr Rollins: I would like to address a couple of the concerns these people have addressed.

To the member for Parkdale, I'm not sure, I don't know whether this establishment sets the tuition fees across the province; I was under the impression that the tuition fees for the students were set by each university and college on its own. Also, we have put a lot of money out to make sure that's available for students to have some money sent to them.

To the member for London Centre, about the money rolling in, I think if you look at the budget numbers they indicate that there is more money coming in than there was before. No question about it. One of the reasons, we feel very strongly, that there's more money coming in is because of the tax cut.

I know a lot of people think we could have waited for the tax cut, but if we'd have waited and saved until we got to the point we had a balanced budget, we might not have had that increase in jobs, we might not have had the increase in the economy. Other provinces in Canada did not do it and they did not get the support of the growth that we have, and that's the engine that makes it work.

I know, Mr Speaker, it's getting awfully close to 6 o'clock and some of us would probably enjoy supper. Thank you very much and enjoy a good supper.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much, member for Quinte. It now being after 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 6:30 of the clock this evening.

The House adjourned at 1801.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Mercredi 27 mai 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 27 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 27 mai 1998

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PREVENTION OF UNIONIZATION ACT (ONTARIO WORKS), 1998

LOI DE 1998 VISANT À EMPÊCHER LA SYNDICALISATION (PROGRAMME ONTARIO AU TRAVAIL)

Mr Carroll moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 22, An Act to Prevent Unionization with respect to Community Participation under the Ontario Works Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 22, Loi visant à empêcher la syndicalisation en ce qui concerne la participation communautaire visée par la Loi de 1997 sur le programme Ontario au travail.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): I'm pleased to have the opportunity tonight to lead off the debate on a very important issue, Bill 22. I think it's well to revisit for a moment the idea behind the Ontario Works program. As I have spent my short time in government, one thing I've discovered is that our welfare system as it exists is one that does nothing other than trap people in poverty. There is absolutely no way that living on our welfare system, a person or persons will ever be anything other than poor. As I travel across the province on my latest task dealing with the issue of homelessness, I've found out that the ultimate result of people who are poor was that they ended up on the street. The one thing we were told that most of these people needed more than anything else was some help.

The Ontario Works program is designed to give them that help. It is designed to give them the opportunity to be something other than poor, because as I said before, welfare does nothing other than condemn you to a life of poverty. I'd like to quote from Mike Harris. This quote came from the Toronto Star and was a comment that he made following the throne speech. He said: "I don't think there's anything kind about condemning somebody to a lifelong legacy of welfare. I think that's the unkindest move of all. Wanting to lift people up to the dignity of a job — surely there can be no greater opportunity for us to help people than that." I subscribe strongly to that philosophy that the best thing that we can do for those folks who find themselves at a disadvantage, who find themselves temporarily without work and dependent upon the

system, the best thing we can do is to give them the help they need so they can return to a productive lifestyle.

As opposed to the comments of our leader, Premier Harris, we have the comments of Sid Ryan, the head of one of our famous unions in the province. Sid Ryan says that he would fight against expansion of workfare into the private sector. He's quoted as saying: "Mike, just watch us. We're going to go out and we're going to organize people in workfare programs. We're going to make them members of our trade unions." Can you imagine anything more ridiculous than people who are dependent upon the taxpayers of this province to help them out because of a temporary situation in their life being organized by the trade unions, led by people such as Sid Ryan, so that they, while being paid by the taxpayers because they are temporarily in need of assistance, are put in a position where they can go on strike for more taxpayer dollars or for longer holidays? It's hard to imagine anything more ridiculous than that happening in our province.

I'd like to quote also from another famous labour guy a little closer to my riding of Chatham-Kent, and that's Rick Witherspoon, who happens to be the president of the London and District Labour Council. London has been having some problems with the Ontario Works program. I'm quoting from a letter that Mr Witherspoon sent to several —

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): They begged you not to put the law in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Member for London Centre.

Mr Carroll: — sent to several social service agencies and volunteer agencies in the city of London. This particular one is addressed to Community Living London. He starts off by saying:

"Dear Friends:

"As you are aware, many of you will soon be called upon to make some choices due to the introduction of workfare. Agencies will be offered the opportunity to participate in the Tory forced labour system under the guise of community participation. In this regard, we are writing this letter to make a heartfelt appeal but also to issue a frank warning."

Mr Witherspoon goes on to say, "If you participate in workfare, whatever rationalizations you may employ, you're acting as a cop for the Tories."

As opposed to understanding that participation in workfare offers people who need our help an opportunity to rejuvenate their lives, Mr Witherspoon goes about threatening agencies who are in the business of helping

people, and because they want to help, Mr Witherspoon thinks it appropriate to threaten them with repercussions. He says at the end of his little diatribe here: "Please reject workfare and work with us to prevent the spread of this vile and abusive system." How in the name of everything that's sacred could anybody look at a system that's designed to assist people in need as a "vile and abusive system"? It's really difficult to understand.

You might be interested in the press's response to Mr Witherspoon because they also picked up on this issue, and I'm going to quote from an editorial in the London Free Press from May 8 headlined, "Labour Out of Line with Bully Tactics."

This editorial says: "Labour was not elected by the people of this province to determine social policy." Isn't that a pretty profound acknowledgement? "Labour's threats to already overstressed local service agencies are an attack on the most vulnerable members in our community."

It goes on to say: "Welfare recipients in Ontario are crying out for opportunities to get into the workforce and off welfare. Matching them up with a social service agency who could use the help and who might give them training and some good work habits makes a lot of sense. The labour council's attempt to deny welfare recipients this opportunity is a huge step out of their bounds."

It's interesting that a program designed to help the working men and ladies of this province who find themselves disadvantaged is criticized by labour and those who want to participate in it are threatened.

Just yesterday it came to my attention in the city of Sarnia, just north of my riding of Chatham-Kent, that a union there threatened to withhold funding from the Heart and Stroke Foundation, a very, very worthwhile foundation that we all are very much aware of and probably many of us participate in, because they were participating and trying to help some people get off the welfare system through the Ontario Works program. Incredible in this day and age that the trade union movement would be so narrow-minded.

I'd like to contrast that with what's happening in my particular riding. I would say that in the city of London, by a quote in the paper, they've had a very difficult time meeting their objective of the number of folks who should be involved in community participation because of the threats from organized labour.

In my community of Chatham-Kent where organized labour has been much more responsible and in fact has taken a laissez-faire attitude and has understood the importance of us helping people who need our help, we in Chatham have had over 500 people involved in community placements. We've had some wonderful experiences of people getting training on a job and moving on to paid employment.

We actually focus the program two ways: We look at folks and ask what are their needs and what are their skills and the people in the social services department go out and find a meaningful placement for those folks. The other side is, they have agencies coming forward with mean-

ingful placements and then they match some folks who are on welfare to those placements.

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We have had some wonderful experiences. I had an opportunity recently to visit Rondeau park, one of our fine provincial parks that's located in the south end of Kent county, and Rondeau park has about a dozen Ontario Works participants working there. I talked with several of them but the one who impressed me the most was a young single mom who had been working at the park for about two months. She actually had had a fair bit of school training in horticulture and had not been able to find work because she had some personal issues she was dealing with.

She was now working in the entranceway to Rondeau park and was getting some additional training on computers. According to the people who were working with her, her whole life had changed dramatically as the result of somebody saying to her, "We're going to give you an opportunity to help yourself to get out of that terrible life that you've been living because of the fact that you were trapped in the welfare system." This girl had nothing but glowing, positive comments.

In addition to that, I have several other quotes from different people across the province involved in the program. "I get references on my résumé that I wouldn't have had," said one. We all know how important résumés are when it comes to finding meaningful employment. Another one told us, "It's a good way to get out and get more job experience."

It's easy to get trapped. If you get caught sitting at home, it's easy after a very short period of time to understand, "Maybe all I am capable of doing is sitting at home." We need to offer people the opportunity to get out and to assist and help themselves.

Another quote: "I think workfare has given me the go-ahead to do what I've learned." Finally, "I have a brighter outlook on my future."

There are hundreds of examples across the province of people who have taken advantage of the opportunity and of agencies that have provided the opportunity. We've put the two together and we've had some remarkable success stories of the benefits of Ontario Works.

These are real-life stories, the positive experiences from people who were trapped in that cycle of welfare dependency, and they can now see that they have a brighter future thanks to Ontario Works.

The other side of the issue, of course, is we must have an economy in our province that is generating new private sector jobs that will allow people who get the training through Ontario Works to find some meaningful employment so they can become taxpaying citizens.

Taxpayers have told us that they want welfare to offer real assistance to people. They don't want it to become a way of life. They have told us they want to see people get off welfare and into jobs as soon as possible.

This government will not stand by and allow labour leaders to stop people from getting this valuable experience. We will not allow the organized labour move-

ment in this province to dash the hopes of people on Ontario Works.

Bill 22, if passed, would provide that the Labour Relations Act, 1995, does not apply with respect to participants in a community participation activity under the Ontario Works Act. Its purpose would be to prevent those participants from unionizing or striking. Individuals participating in community placements would continue to have, as they should have and are very much entitled to, basic health and safety protections. Everyone in the province is entitled to those.

We promised major reform to Ontario's welfare system. We are following through on that commitment, and three principles have guided us through this process of change: fairness, accountability and effectiveness.

Social programs must be fair to the recipient and to the taxpayer who's paying the bill. A mutual and interlocking set of accountabilities must apply. Ontario Works participants are accountable for their own efforts to become self-reliant and to join or rejoin the workforce. Government is accountable to the taxpayers and to those for whom the programs are designed.

Ontario Works is aimed at creating critical links between welfare recipients and employment, and that is because, as I stated at the beginning, staying on welfare does nothing other than condemn a person to abject poverty their entire life. The only hope to improve the quality of life for those people who find themselves on welfare is through employment, the only option.

The program, Ontario Works, has three key elements: community participation, employment supports and employment placements. It provides access to work experience, job search, basic education, job-specific skills training and referrals to job placements. It also provides financial assistance to people in need.

Community participation is a fundamental element of Ontario Works. Community placements provide welfare recipients with the opportunity to contribute to their communities, acquire skills, gain valuable work experience and make contacts for future employment. This is what we are trying to protect.

Ontario Works is now in place across the province. It's making welfare work. More than 273,000 people have participated in one or more of the program's three activities. Already we have seen an unprecedented decline in the number of people on welfare in this province. Over a quarter of a million people, 250,000 people, have moved off welfare since June 1995, partially due to an improving economy, partially due to the efforts of the Ontario Works program.

This bill will be another step in our plan for welfare reform. By protecting the integrity of Ontario Works, it would enable the full benefits of our welfare reform to be achieved for those on welfare who want to escape its cycle of dependency and for the taxpayers who pay for the system.

Ontario Works restores the welfare system to its original purpose: a transitional program of last resort that

provides people on welfare with a stepping stone back into the workforce.

Some critics have falsely claimed that workfare would displace people in paid jobs. Nothing could be further from the truth. From the beginning we have stated very clearly that the Ontario Works guidelines would prevent this. Ontario Works placements will not displace people in paid jobs.

It's very hard to understand why union leaders want to torpedo this program. I can't understand why they are threatening community agencies with picketing and with the withdrawal of donations if these agencies participate in a program that is designed to assist people trapped in the welfare system. Instead of trying to sabotage this successful program, why won't unions work with the agencies and devote their energies to helping people help themselves?

It's interesting: Every person who could move from the welfare system into paid employment would then necessarily be eligible to become a member of a trade union. I fail to understand why it wouldn't be in the best interests of our trade union movement to say, "We're going to assist the government to assist these agencies to help these folks get the training and the opportunity they need to join the workforce where they can then become full taxpaying members of society," and then possibly the unions would have some more folks that they could go out and try to unionize. To me that would just make sense and be good for business. I fail to understand why they do not approach it in that kind of a sensible way.

Union opposition will not deflect us from our goal of helping people get back to work. We believe honestly that people are better off working. I cannot imagine that our members opposite do not feel the same way. There is no better way to assist the people who are trapped in the welfare system, some of them for many years, to get back to work than through the benefits of Ontario Works where they get an opportunity to improve their skills, to network with some people, to get some additional opportunities to put on their résumé — no better way than we've come up with or that anybody else has come up with to assist those folks.

The net result of the passage of Bill 22, should that occur in this Legislature, is that we would avoid the absolutely ridiculous situation of those persons who are being paid by the taxpayers because they find themselves temporarily indisposed going on strike to increase the amount of money they get from the taxpayers or to increase their vacation time. This bill, if passed, would prevent that ridiculous situation from happening.

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I would hope that the trade union movement would somewhere, in its wisdom, in the near future remember its original concept, and that was to help people, to help the working men to improve their lot. That was the original concept of the trade union movement, and I don't know how that possibly jibes with the fact that they now think it is in their mandate to threaten social service agencies that are intent on helping the working man who finds himself

indisposed to get back to work. I do not understand how the trade union leaders of today, the Sid Ryans of today, can square the mandate of trade unionism to help the working man with their total resistance and opposition and, quite frankly, threatening of the Ontario Works program that will do nothing other than help people help themselves get back to work.

It will be my pleasure to support Bill 22.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):

Twice the member referred to ridiculous situations. I'll tell you, it's a ridiculous situation that we're even discussing this bill here tonight. I think the people of Ontario ought to be reminded that one of the reasons that this one-page bill is before us tonight is the fact that the members of the government caucus were asleep at the time when a particular section was called in the original workfare bill that dealt with the section we're dealing with now. You may recall they didn't put up their hands. They were asleep. There was quite a story about this at the time. I don't think the parliamentary assistant himself put up his hand at the time. It's another case of the government simply not knowing what it's doing, being totally unprepared, having to call a bill over and over again. The minister is shaking his head, but he knows I am right.

The thing I really find amazing about all this is the fact that when you think back on what this government has done over the last three years, it all comes down to attacking groups of people in our society. It started with the attack on the people on welfare by cutting their benefits, and then we went to the OPSEU workers who work for the government, and then they attacked the firefighters. You may recall that. Then, after that, there were the nurses, and who can ever forget the teachers? Now it's the union bosses.

There are some good union bosses and there are some bad union bosses, just like there are some good people and some bad people in the world, and to listen to a speech like that from a parliamentary assistant of a government that is supposed to unite the people of Ontario I think is shameful. I cannot understand why this government can't get it through their heads that eventually they're not going to win by —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further questions or comments? The member for London Centre.

Mrs Boyd: It's always a pleasure to have an opportunity to comment on the speeches of the member for Chatham-Kent, particularly when he adds such gasoline to the fire that's already burning in so many people around this unjust law.

The member talks about not having any idea why organized labour would in any way oppose this program and makes the assumption that they somehow resent people coming off welfare and having jobs. That's not the issue. What they resent is that this government is forcing people, is creating a system of slave labour, in order for people to get the basic necessities of life, a very different prospect.

The member talks proudly of this young woman at the gate of Rondeau Provincial Park. Who used to be at the gate? Who used to earn dollars? Who used to have a job that was a real job guarding that gate at Rondeau Provincial Park? Why wouldn't organized labour oppose a scheme that is designed to create an underclass of people who are forced to work for whatever the government chooses to hand out from time to time, without having any real opportunity to seek real jobs?

If the member were so concerned about young women like the woman he talked about getting ahead, he wouldn't have made it impossible for these young women to get adult education in their communities. He wouldn't have made it impossible for them to go to college and university because they would have to fund it all out of OSAP loans and go into debt as opposed to being able to get that training as they used to, with dignity, under the family benefits plan. The member is simply carrying out his government's anti-labour, anti-vulnerable program to create a permanent underclass of people in this province.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'd certainly like to lead off by complimenting the member for Chatham-Kent for just an excellent presentation, excellent content. We're talking about a bill that we find is necessary to bring in, but it shouldn't be. It shouldn't be if the unions and the attitudes —

Mr Gerretsen: Yes, because you bungled it the first time.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, you had your turn.

Mr Galt: — of the third party weren't such as they are, we wouldn't have to be bringing in this kind of legislation. It's hard to believe that it's necessary, but it's only in Ontario that this could possibly be.

I listen to the member for Kingston and The Islands and some of his comments and, wow, when did the welfare rates increase the most? It was in the good times in the 1980s. That's when it was really going up. Why? Look at the amount you were paying and the kind of response that the public —

Mr Gerretsen: Yeah, sure. You were getting rich on it.

Mr Galt: — and so they ended up, it was better to be on welfare than out taking minimum wage or working. Why do we bring 10,000 people a year into this province to help with the crops? Because of the kinds of things that your government did, it ended up that people felt more comfortable being on welfare.

Mrs Boyd: Nobody's comfortable on welfare.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Galt: The member for Chatham-Kent was talking about the fairness and accountability and the effectiveness of this program. I couldn't agree more on the fairness of trying to help people out of that trap of welfare and getting out into a job —

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Galt: — that's accountable to society and to the community. It provides that hope, the opportunity that

people want, and the opportunity for them to have some growth in their community and within their inner self. No one is happy — at least no one should be, and I don't think anyone is — being at home on welfare wherever. People feel so much better being out. The program of Ontario Works is the kind of program that's making this happen.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : C'est avec plaisir que je viens répondre aux propos de notre collègue de Chatham-Kent. Je crois que ça devrait être laissé à l'individu, s'il veut adhérer à un syndicat ou non. L'individu devrait avoir le choix; d'après tous, nous sommes dans un pays démocratique. C'est la démocratie. Lorsqu'un employé veut contribuer à un système, s'il veut contribuer au système de syndicalisation, le projet de loi dit : «Loi visant à empêcher la syndicalisation en ce qui concerne la participation communautaire visée par la Loi de 1997 sur le programme Ontario au travail».

Je crois que c'était facile pour encourager les gens à retourner au travail. Nous n'avions seulement qu'avoir un «incentive» comme nous l'avons actuellement dans le système de la section 25 d'emploi, des personnes sans emploi sous le programme d'assurance-chômage. Actuellement, nous avons essayé de les remettre sur le marché du travail, les gens qui sont bénéficiaires du bien-être. Mais jamais, jamais sommes-nous arrivés à dire : «Nous allons te donner tant plus que 520 \$ par mois si tu veux participer au programme.» Il faut s'assurer qu'avec ce programme, il y a de grands dangers que les personnes qui vont se joindre au programme Ontario au travail prennent la place des étudiants.

L'été s'en vient à grands pas. Les étudiants qui sortent de l'université, nous savons que leurs frais d'initiation augmentent à tous les ans, et aujourd'hui, ces étudiants ont besoin du travail pour payer leurs études. Mais, avec le programme que vous allez mettre sur pied, non seulement vont-ils être dictés : «Vous ne pouvez pas vous joindre à un syndicat», maintenant, est-ce qu'il est possible qu'ils vont prendre la place des étudiants qui doivent défrayer leurs études à l'université ?

Donc, ce sont les points que je veux aborder.

1900

Mr Carroll: I appreciate the comments from the members for Kingston and The Islands, London Centre, Northumberland and Prescott and Russell, if I could just address some.

The member for Kingston and The Islands talked about — I'm not really sure what he said actually — but he talked about us constantly attacking people. He basically would give the same comment on whatever speech we gave over here. He talks about us attacking people, and I guess the only people we're attacking are those who would stand in the way of the poor who are trapped in a welfare system getting some help. I think it's okay for a government elected to serve the people of Ontario to attack people who would stand in the way of those who do not want to help the poor.

It's always interesting to hear the comments of the member for London Centre. I know her heart is in the right

place. She and I disagree obviously on how we get to the end result, but I think we both want to get to the same place.

She talked about a scheme designed to create an underclass of people. My God, I think we have one now. What we're trying to do is take that group of people who find themselves in that position and elevate them to a more meaningful lifestyle. I think that is a worthwhile objective. I believe she understands the objective. We disagree on the means and we will continue to disagree. Our system, I believe, is working. We inherited a system from her government that had one out of every eight people in this province trapped on welfare. Their answer obviously didn't work.

The member for Prescott and Russell made reference to the fact that we're taking jobs away from students. I have heard recently that in Toronto there are an awful lot of summer jobs for students. I know down in my part of the country there are lots of summer jobs for students. In the Leamington area they can't find people to work in the greenhouses because they don't have any people to work. There are lots of jobs available out there.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Mr Speaker, I would like to request unanimous consent to defer our leadoff speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Patten: I am pleased to join in the debate tonight. As has already been pointed out, the bill is one page and it's one page in the form of a new bill because the government side at committee, as has already been pointed out by my friend from Kingston and The Islands, was asleep at the switch and didn't put in the clause at that particular point, so here we are.

What this does, though, is point out a pattern. The pattern is that this is unfortunately another way in which this government practises its politics of division. The government, in my opinion, is exploiting the sentiment held by certain members of the public who have been led to believe that unions are the root cause of anything that is wrong in our economy or anything that is wrong in our social fabric.

In this particular instance, the government's legislation seeks to insinuate that unions are somehow not in favour of people getting into the workforce, nor are they in favour of people getting off welfare. I would suggest that the contrary would be true.

But a few basic questions come to mind when I read the bill, which doesn't take very long because it's a very short bill, as you know, and there really is only one section in it that is the heart of it. Will this legislation prevent people from openly associating? Why is the government acting in such a negative and confrontational manner?

I quote from the heart of the bill: "...no person shall do any of the following with respect to his or her participation in a community participation activity." The wording and the tone of the legislation suggest that the provincial government is dispensing with the deeply held and long-held beliefs of the majority of Canadians, as well as

people who cherish the democratic principles around the world.

The first part of what I am going to say is in response to my responsibilities as the human rights critic. I know that all members have a concern for that, and we have heard indeed on the government side Minister Bassett who in December of last year dedicated that 1998 would be a time for "reflection, education and re-dedication." Of course, she was speaking on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Why then does the government bring in this legislation which does so much to perhaps threaten the rights that it acknowledges? There may be a legal technicality here where in fact the bill is fine, but it's a slippery slope when we begin to take away rights that are really universal.

Let me say a few words about human rights as defined by that great document and by our own Canadian Constitution. I'd like to quote Professor Roy Adams of McMaster University. This was actually in last Friday's newspaper on the topic of freedom of association:

"Its status as a basic human right was reaffirmed in the covenants of the United Nations adopted in the 1960s. It is referred to as a fundamental democratic right in the constitution of the International Labour Organization, which is the UN agency that deals with labour. It recently received additional reaffirmation and support in the Vienna Declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights, which was signed by the representatives of over 170 countries in 1993. It has been recognized as a fundamental right by such diverse international organizations as the World Trade Organization, the International Organization of Employers and by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development."

This is what Dr Adams had to say. But note the endorsement of freedom of association and assembly as a basic right by the WTO and the OECD, both of whom are trade-oriented and market-encouraging organizations. It cannot be argued that it is just the UN and its affiliates that encourage this particular principle.

Furthermore, it is a right which is firmly entrenched in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in section 2:

"Fundamental freedoms:

"(c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and

"(d) freedom of association."

Those are two of the four listed fundamental freedoms in the charter within our Canadian Constitution.

I propose to you today that this legislation may be in contravention of both the spirit and the substance of these basic democratic frameworks. It's a negative and a mean-spirited bill that I believe discourages the participatory ideals certainly that we as Liberals hold dear and hopefully all members of this Legislature hold dear.

My caution of course on the human rights side is that it comes so close to the right and freedom of assembly. What would happen if some — and I can't really imagine this happening frankly because of the nature of the people who are in these work situations, struggling to try and get ahead. There are many single mothers who are struggling to keep their children healthy and fit and managing a home

front at the same time. I can't imagine them looking at ways in which across the province they might want to get together with others and whether indeed they would qualify, even under existing arrangements, to join a union in their particular area, because they're not permanent staff, they're temporary, they're in a training mode, some are part-time and this sort of thing.

I want to say that as Liberals we fundamentally oppose what we believe is an intent to be undemocratic, which further attacks mainly the poor or those people who are caught in a poor circumstance in this province and unions as well.

Our leader, Dalton McGuinty, in his response to Minister Ecker's introduction of this bill said, "The minister and the other members of her government are suffering from a terrible dearth of positive public ideas." Then he went on to provide some examples that our party has been working on, a document called First Steps, and indeed had offered this to the minister as some positive steps that could be taken in order to address the real root causes of the situation in which people find themselves when they're unemployed.

I'd also like to quote Dalton McGuinty from the throne speech debate when he said: "...what this tells us" — and he's referring to the response of the government to many cutbacks that affect poor children and affect people who are on welfare — "is that Mike Harris somehow thinks that the poor are different from the rest of us. What he doesn't get is that but for fate, we would be the poor and they would be us; but for fate, we would be the disabled and they would be us; but for fate, we would be the sick and they would be us; we would be the homeless and they would be us, and so on and so on. The people of this province didn't elect the Premier just for the healthy and the wealthy. He was elected as a Premier for all Ontarians."

1910

I agree with that. It seems to me that the government, not just with this, but it seems to be a point in a pattern, has contributed to a climate of confrontation with labour, from making replacement workers illegal, to cutting benefits to injured workers, to attempting to give sweeping powers that would override long-standing labour negotiation rights for workers affected by amalgamations of our school boards, municipalities and hospitals. Of course, that was Bill 136 that was brought in earlier last year.

This government, it seems to me, is anti-worker — the cancellation of the employee wage protection program — since employees are far down the scale on the list of creditors after bankruptcies. Employees have almost no chance of recovering lost wages. They will go on to other systems, such as employment insurance, and if that runs out, then of course they will be stuck on welfare and perhaps even workfare.

From that standpoint, is it a wise investment to not provide initial opportunities for some resources when people are not paid due wages? We can make sure that they will pay the big banks who are making billions of dollars, but

some poor workers who are due past wages are at the end of the line. We want to do something about that.

The government is ignoring the significant problems on the economic and social fronts and the tremendous changes that take place. We've got tremendous changes in our economy now that we haven't had before, with the new information age, with the new service emphasis, with the impact of economic globalization. It's a whole economy we have to come at, helping people get out of unemployment in a completely different manner. So we need to be creative. This isn't creative; this is punitive.

The quality of life index in Ontario in 1997, prepared by the Ontario Social Development Council and the Social Planning Network of Ontario — this was just last week; I'm sure you have read the articles — indicates significant impacts and in fact suggests that our standard of living, as most people will know, shows a drop here in Ontario. That's most unfortunate.

I want to spend a moment comparing with other jurisdictions on this whole area of workfare and what is the record. It seems to me the record is in dire need of improvement, because it is surely wanting. I've been doing some homework on this and I'll share with you what I've discovered. We've looked at comparisons with other jurisdictions and I'd like to quote an article in the *New York Times*, April 15, about New York's workfare program. The mayor of New York said his workfare program has played the central part in the dramatic reduction of New York City's welfare rolls. We hear this wherever there's a workfare program. The numbers he cites are stark and indisputable.

Quoting from the article: "The rolls have dropped more than 30% in the last three years, to 797,000 from 1.16 million." Imagine that. "But an examination of workfare shows that the program's role in that decline often has little to do with offering a route into the job market. In many ways, workfare has become welfare's back door, allowing the city to trim thousands of people from its welfare rolls each month for violating its work rules.

"In the first eight months of 1997, about 16% of workfare participants — or an average of 61,000 out of 36,000 people each month — were cut from the rolls for infractions that ranged from showing up late to refusing a work assignment."

"Now, there's no question that some who leave welfare do get real jobs, but available evidence indicates that they make up a small fraction. A recent state survey found that fewer than a third make more than \$100 on the books in the first three months after leaving the rolls. The survey did not distinguish between full- and part-time jobs, nor did it take into account people who were working off the books, were self-employed" or who maybe even moved out of New York state itself.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): What's wrong with being self-employed?

Mr Patten: Nothing wrong with that. I think that's great. I'm talking about the appropriate development and the accounting of statistics.

One of the comments that was made was that "It's like musical chairs where there are nine chairs but 12 people." As Liz Krueger, who is the director of the Nonprofit Community Food Resource Center, said, "The real number of people needing welfare is still 12, but the caseload is only nine."

Further from an article on April 13 in the *New York Times*, and I'll address this as a concern for those who are saying there is a replacement for employment — the member for Chatham-Kent raised this question and I'd like to address it:

"By filling a spectrum of jobs — from feeding hospital patients to painting park benches to translating at welfare centers — workfare participants have quietly become an important, but unofficial, part of New York City's municipal workforce.

"These unheralded workers do much of the grunt work that makes city government run. Workfare participants and welfare experts say many New Yorkers fail to understand a significant fact about the program: the 34,000 people in the city's Work Experience Program constitute a low-cost labor force that does a substantial amount of the work that had been done by municipal employees before" — the mayor — "reduced the city payroll by about 20,000 employees, or about 10%."

There's one piece of direct evidence that suggests that this is in fact a replacement in some instances. It's not all one thing and it's not all the other, but as you piece the whole picture together the evidence suggests that there are not very good results.

I would like to point out in Wisconsin, for example, which I know the Minister of Community and Social Services is often anxious to point out, some of workfare's main features: that benefits on the workfare program don't adjust to the size of the family; that high copayments for child care push people into informal and inadequate babysitting; that even though a single parent must work when the child reaches 12 weeks of age, there is a nine-month waiting list for infant child care.

"In 1997," with stated stats from Wisconsin of low unemployment, "participants were left in deep poverty; the average hourly wage for those in private jobs was \$5.65, and little more than half had full-time jobs. Only one in six participants had private health insurance" as well with a very poor safety net.

Another startling statistic: "Since its implementation as of September 1997, homelessness, shelter use and food aid are all up dramatically and the number of children from welfare families entering foster care increased by 60%."

So you have to take a look at the whole picture, I would suggest.

"There have been numerous complaints on the performance of the companies that run welfare" on improperly terminating families and people.

"Learnfare" was a dismal failure: It required high school students to attend special classes. After one year, 47% of in-school youth dropped out of school completely." That was great.

"Those who left welfare for work got very low-paying jobs: 75% lost their jobs after one year, only 14% of jobs paid full-time wages, and 4% of jobs paid wages that would support a family" — 4%.

"Only 16% of single parents who left welfare in 1996 had earnings above the poverty line and 34% had no earnings."

I've only got a few minutes so I'd like to point out —

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member for Ottawa Centre makes such an excellent speech that I think we ought to have a quorum in the House, and there's not a quorum present right now.

The Acting Speaker: Would you please check if we have a quorum.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

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Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr Patten: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

After having done a review, done a comparison, having looked at a lot of workfare programs, I'd like us to place things on the basis of data: good research, objective data. Let's bring that to the House and let's look at it. We get all these partisan comments back and forth, and perhaps all parties engage in this kind of discussion, but I'd like to see what the record shows. How successful is this program? What do the data suggest? What is the success rate of finding full-time employment and meaningful employment in the program throughout Ontario?

One thing I would say is that the characteristics of successful work programs suggest that they have to be long term; they have to be related to long-term skill development and education, not just short-term training and fast-tracking entry into any jobs. These programs cost more but the successful programs that we were able to analyse out of Oregon, Chicago and Oklahoma show they are far more successful and therefore in the long term are far less costly to our society and far richer for those who find employment as a result.

In summary, to successfully get people on welfare into the workforce, the government must implement innovative economic and labour market strategies, invest in long-term skill development training and basic adult education, invest in regulated high-quality child care, invest in job counselling and job support programs.

Ontario Works lacks all of these characteristics, I suggest, and there are others. People do not need to be mandated to take advantage of genuine opportunities when they're available and when they are offered. I believe this bill does not add to the climate and the support and the spirit of people who are looking for ways to get out of being unemployed.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? The member for London Centre.

Mrs Boyd: It's a pleasure to comment on the discussion of the member for Ottawa Centre, who quite clearly understands why the actions that the government is taking

are absolutely counter to the notion of empowerment of the people being affected by these actions.

The government has taken an attitude that it knows best, that it must force people to seek out the best course to become self-reliant and independent, and they have chosen to make a mandatory program and they have chosen with this bill to block any attempt of those who are forced to participate under the mandatory program to gain any kind of control over their own destiny.

We do not make people independent by taking away their independence, taking away their ability to make choices, taking away their ability to learn the things they need to know in order to improve their lot. Yet that is exactly what this government has done in bill after bill.

In this bill what they are doing is trying to prevent those who are being coerced by the government under a mandatory program from being able to take collective action to protect health and safety concerns, any concerns around the working conditions, any concerns around the way in which tasks are assigned, any ability to counter any abuses that they may find while in that work. There's no protection for people under this program from abuses by those employers to whom they are being sent. Of course that would be even worse if this government extends it to the private sector, which we fully expect.

Mr Galt: It's certainly interesting to listen to the member for Ottawa Centre and his comments about this very thin bill. He complained there wasn't enough paper there. Then we have a bill that has 100 pages or so and they complain it's a mega-bill. It's just hard to come in and make them happy.

I notice he talked a lot about rights, and I think that was an excellent point that he was making. We're thinking about the rights of these people who are trying to find work. We're thinking about the rights of organizations like the Heart and Stroke Foundation when unions are trying to keep funds from going to them just because they're trying to help people find work. We're thinking about the rights of the United Way that unions have regularly threatened because they're trying to help people find work.

I noticed he also made reference to quotes and their leader, Dalton McGuinty. You notice he didn't make any reference to "mandatory opportunity" that their party talked about in the famous red book in the last campaign. I never did get an explanation of what "mandatory opportunity" stood for and I look forward to that from the member for Ottawa Centre when he gets his chance for the two-minute response, because I still don't understand what "mandatory opportunity" stands for.

He talked a bit about being anti-worker. I can't imagine this being anti-worker. This is very pro-worker, and particularly when during the term so far we've created approximately 400,000 net new jobs, I'm told, just a record with the kinds of net new jobs that are coming into this province.

He also was quoting a lot from American statistics. I'm quite surprised that a member of the Liberal Party would be quoting American statistics, because every time we

mention it, "Oh, that's way to the right and that's not the kind of thing you should be recognizing." They're very anti-American. Lo and behold, here's the member for Ottawa Centre quoting American statistics.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Yesterday I made a grave error.

The Acting Speaker: Restart the clock, please.

Mr Preston: Regardless of the fact and regardless of my thoughts, I said that there should be people throwing peanuts to the opposition. Regardless of the fact, that was unparliamentary and I would like to apologize for it.

The Acting Speaker: Okay.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): That was an interesting intervention from the member opposite, but I'm here to commend the member for Ottawa Centre for his very perceptive comments on this bill. I have to say that the member for Ottawa Centre, in my view, was extremely restrained —

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): What were you here for yesterday?

The Acting Speaker: Minister.

Mr Cullen: — in his comments with respect to how repugnant this bill is to some of the fundamental rights and principles that we hold in this House.

I cannot believe that yesterday we were talking about national unity but today you want to create two classes of Canadians. You want to deny ordinary Canadians, through no fault of their own, who happen to be —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. It's his turn.

Hon Mrs Marland: But what gall. He was not here speaking about Canadian unity.

The Acting Speaker: Minister, please.

Mr Cullen: What this bill says is, "No person shall do any of the following with respect to his or her participation in" the Ontario Works "community participation activity:

"1. Join a trade union." Why can every other Canadian — why can lawyers do it and doctors do it and journalists do it and firemen do it and engineers do it, but the poor cannot?

"2. Have the terms and conditions under which he or she participates determined through collective bargaining." Why not?

"3. Strike." And then to forbid them the right to strike? It is farcical to expect that people in poverty, if they take it upon themselves to say, "We won't take the very cheque that supports our family," this government says: "Oh no, we'll put you in jail. It is illegal." "Oh, please, give me that nice warm home. Please give me those three squares a day."

It is ridiculous what this government is setting up, saying it's illegal for the poor to go on strike. Listen to yourselves. Listen to how you offend the charter, how you say that the poor cannot do what the rest of us can do. And you have the gall to talk about —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Your time has expired.

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Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): This is but a two-minute response to the comments made by Mr Patten, but after Mr Patten replies in his two minutes — in about four minutes' time; here we are at 7:30 — I will be addressing this bill for a good chunk of time here in the Legislature and I look forward to the chance.

Somebody made reference to the blessed brevity of the bill, but I tell you it's a nasty bit of business in its brevity. It's pretty straightforward. There are no hidden messages here. This is as blunt and bold and clear an attack on Canadians and Ontarians as could ever be committed. I talked about this as being one of the most repugnant, vilest, foulest things to cross this Legislature in two and a half years, and I stand by it.

After the two-minute response by Mr Patten, I'm going to be speaking to the bill. I'm going to have a chance to talk about the St Catharines Standard and the workers who are on strike there, because that's very much relevant to the bill. I'm going to talk about the St Catharines Standard strike and the 31 workers there who have been forced for the first time in the St Catharines Standard's history out on to the streets.

I'm going to be talking about the meeting I attended last night with the Welland District Boy Scout Council and their leadership, because that's relevant to the legislation.

I'm going to be talking once again, as I have before in this Legislature, about the Crowland relief workers' strike, which is being revived again. Those dirty days of the Dirty Thirties and Mitch Hepburn and his hussars are being returned to Ontario after decades of workers' struggles to gain some modest rights to organize, to collectively bargain and indeed to strike.

I'll be talking about those things in the context of Bill 22, about some of the people down in Welland-Thorold and what they have told me about Bill 22 and workfare, and I will be looking forward to it. That will be in two minutes' time.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Ottawa Centre, you have two minutes.

Mr Patten: I will begin in the reverse order. I want to thank the member for Welland-Thorold for his advertisement and for pointing out the significance of this tiny bill, the major point that it makes in that it just kind of points its finger in the stomach of some of the unions.

My friend from Ottawa West, who is a fiery and eloquent speaker, talked about the potential for developing two classes of citizens here, and I think if you take a close look at it, he would certainly be looking in the right direction.

My colleague from London Centre makes an extremely important point. It's a fundamental proposition or principle of human relations that you don't help people become independent and self-reliant by taking away their independence and by exercising punitive, mean-spirited elements. That doesn't uphold a sense of dignity.

I say to my friend from Northumberland, who mentioned that this was there in order to support workers, that

it doesn't. What we know about human relations is simple. It is that you provide growth in a person by nurturing, by supporting, by providing opportunities, by encouraging, by assisting truly and recognizing the dignity in every single human being. What this does is assume the worst of people. It assumes people are trying to take advantage of a program. I do not believe, and I think most members do not believe, that is the case.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? Member for Welland-Thorold.

Interjections: Hear, hear.

Mr Kormos: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

I look forward to the chance to speak to this. As I say, it's as brief a bit of legislation as we have seen come through here, but at the same time — the bill is going to pass. Let me tell the Tory members here, the bill is going to pass. Bill 22 is going to become legislation. I have no hesitation whatsoever in anticipating that. I have no difficulty in telling you that.

We have only had second reading debate. There has been but one Conservative government member speak to it, but one Liberal member and now myself. Notwithstanding what will consist of 90 minutes of debate all said and done, the bill is going to pass, not because it's the right thing to do, not because it's fair, not because it's just, not even because it's politically wise, but because we've got a government here, and it's a majority government — my God, I've known that; I'm as sensitive to that as anybody could be — and when it whips its troops into line, they'll do what they are told rather than what they think is right. They'll vote for it down to the last member.

In that final observation, I hope I'm wrong. I would be more than pleased, and I will look forward to being able to stand up in this Legislature and apologize for suggesting that every single member of the government caucus will support this bill just because they were told to. I will look forward to apologizing to the Conservative backbenchers who stand up and say, "No, I believe in something far more profound with regard to basic human dignity and human rights than what this bill represents."

Let's go back. We know the history of the bill. Speaker, you'll recall that. As a matter of fact, it was Ms Lankin sitting in on the committee. They were doing clause-by-clause. There was a narcoleptic member of the Tory caucus who had, well, nodded off for a few minutes, and the section that dealt with exemption of workfare captives from the Employment Standards Act didn't get passed. This member from — Mrs Boyd, the narcoleptic member borders on your riding.

Mrs Boyd: Yes, London South.

Mr Kormos: This member for London South nodded all through it, and it was only after a sharp nudge to the ribs that left him in pain for a good 36 hours afterwards and had him crying foul about the —

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: Listen, it was a sight to behold, because all Hades broke loose, let me tell you. It was: "You won't believe what we just did. We blew it. We screwed up the

exemption of workfare captives from the Employment Standards Act."

Here we go again, more cleanup. It's like a little bit of Cafon Court, déjà vu all over again, right? So we knew some Cafon Court cleanup was in order. We knew that.

But let me tell you, and to you, the parliamentary assistant, this goes well beyond rectifying the error generated by the narcoleptic London South backbencher. This goes far beyond rectifying that brief lapse in attention. Look, we understand people make mistakes. I have made one or two in my life — one or two that I'll admit to. I understand. People make mistakes, and if you come clean about it and you say, "Look, we screwed up; let's try to correct it," that could have happened.

At the end of the day, I suspect, and I'll test my colleagues here, but I suspect that if the minister, Ms Ecker, had stood up and merely said, "Look, you folks know what happened in committee. Ms Lankin got them" — it was a matter of gotcha — Ms Lankin would have suppressed her Cheshire grin and she would have taken the upper road, and I'm sure there would have been virtual consent to a mere correction of the error made by the member for London South by virtue not of his physical absence but his intellectual absence for the briefest of moments. I'm sure we would have consented to it. I mean, you can't test history that way, but I'm sure all the opposition parties would have said: "Oh, sure, okay. Get it through first, second and third reading. We know it's going to happen anyway."

But this goes far beyond merely correcting the error that was made by the government backbenchers when they screwed up big time. God, they blew it, they really messed up when you think about it, all the work that they generated — and they talk about being efficient and saving money. Their backroom people had to scurry and scramble. I'll bet you dollars to doughnuts that their backroom people don't dare suggest, "We deserve a little bit of overtime," and I know they work hard for very little pay. Some of them suspect that they're workfare participants because they suspect they don't have a right to unionize or organize either. I'll bet you the mere mention of a union among Tory staffers would result in the biggest purge you saw since the days of Stalin. No two ways about it: There would be purging. The Cossacks would be riding through, whipping those hard-pressed, underpaid employees into shape in short order.

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This goes far beyond a mere correction of the error made in committee by those Tory backbenchers. This doesn't just say what the original bill would have told us, that workfare participants are exempt from the Employment Standards Act. I tell you, this very brief bill — it's one and an eighth pages long. That's it. One and an eighth. This briefest of bills speaks volumes about this government's plans for the future of this province, for the future of the poorest in this province and for the future of the rights of working women and men.

I don't want to be critical of the parliamentary assistant. I don't want to be critical at all. As a matter of fact,

he chaired the committee that we travelled where we dealt with the so-called Ontario Works Act. He chaired that.

Mrs Boyd: No, she chaired it.

Mr Kormos: But he sat beside the Chair. He was the parliamentary assistant present there. That's right. By God —

Mrs Boyd: It just looked like he was chairing it.

Mr Kormos: But by and large, of the two parliamentary assistants who sat in the chair, he was the more even tempered.

Mrs Boyd: Oh.

Mr Kormos: Well, he was. There were two parliamentary assistants, and the member for — I've got to look at the schematic here — Chatham-Kent every once in a while got cranky, threw a little one, but by and large we lived through it. He did his best, let me tell you. If anybody deserves to make that 10, 11, 12 grand a year extra that parliamentary assistants make in addition to their base MPP's salary, it's the member for Chatham-Kent, because he dealt with some pretty tough issues.

We went to four cities, right? You were with us. You don't remember? We went to four cities, Parliamentary Assistant. Please, it wasn't that long ago, four cities, and they were hard-pressed to find a single supporter in any of those cities for their so-called Ontario Works legislation, hard-pressed to find a single supporter, and they hand-picked them. The opposition had no input whatsoever, a most unusual breach of long-held convention here.

The government members handpicked the cities. We said, "Let's go to the northeast." They said, "Okay, North Bay." For Tories, that's the north, North Bay. I mean, they were packing parkas and mukluks and they had their snowmobile jackets. It was North Bay, for Pete's sake, a far cry from — they simply had no idea. I understand. But for the Tories, the province of Ontario ends in North Bay. They picked North Bay. They figured there were going to be good pickings in North Bay. Sorry. Didn't happen. Ottawa, they figured good pickings. Sorry. Didn't happen. London, they figured good pickings, right? London, Ontario. Sorry. Didn't happen. If anything, the floodgates opened in London and we really started to see the antipathy, the antagonism for this legislation.

We ended up in Niagara Falls. That's where this government just granted that casino deal to the group who came number three in the selection process. You know what we're talking about. They came number three by the government's own panel of experts. It's the Falls Management group, dominated in part by Hyatt, this American hotel chain that operates big convention centres over in New York state and doesn't have much of a performance record when it comes to casinos. Niagara Falls, Ontario — we've been talking about it all week.

Our committee ended up at Niagara Falls — the parliamentary assistant was there — where now we see this government paying off its good political friends who have done a little paying off in their own right to the tune of some major campaign contributions. How else do you climb from number three on the list in terms of the competition for the Niagara Falls casino to number one?

There's only one way that we've seen so far, and that's the largess that some of those players demonstrated towards their Conservative friends and the utilization of Tory insiders to fix the deal.

That's where we ended up, in Niagara Falls. It was the final day, a mere four days of travelling about the province. Again, the Tories figured they had it in the bag in the Falls, but au contraire, to the contrary, it didn't work for them in Niagara Falls either. There was the slimmest, most marginal — by and large, out of several hundred presentations here in Toronto and then on those mere four days, handpicked communities by the gaggle of Tories who dominate the committee, they ended up with no more than five supporters for the so-called — what a misnomer — Ontario Works Act. Ontario hasn't been working for the last two and a half years. Unemployment in Niagara region is up since this government got elected. It's up.

Mrs Boyd: It is in Sault Ste Marie too.

Mr Kormos: My colleague Ms Boyd speaks of Sault Ste Marie and more than a few other parts of the province as well, but I've got to confess I'm a little parochial when I speak about Niagara region. Those are my neighbours down there, my friends, the people I grew up with. The seniors and the retirees are folks I've seen work hard all of their lives, work like dogs — I tell you that without hesitation — hoping that their kids are going to have a little bit better opportunity than they did. They see their children increasingly unemployed, facing unemployment levels that exceed the majority of the rest of the province and that hover in that 8% to 10% range, and that's just the official unemployment.

We simply haven't got a handle on the number of people who have just given up in despair and said, "That's it. There's nothing out there," which is why when we get into the so-called workfare scheme, and I know Mr Patten spoke to this more than a little bit, at the end of the day you've still got between 8% and 10% unemployment here in Ontario. There ain't no jobs. We've seen massive job losses in the course of the last two, two and a half years, some of them right down in Niagara region. We've seen factories shut down. Oh, I could start the litany.

Down again where I come from — again I want to get a little parochial — folks over at Mott's, Mott's Clamato: out of town, pulled out. Don't buy Mott's Clamato. Buy the President's Choice. It's just as good and you're buying a made-in-Canada product instead of buying something from a runaway company that abandoned the workers in St Catharines and scurried off to warmer climes.

Folks, I suppose, at Black and Decker out in eastern Ontario — Mr Cullen may well be able to speak to that. He's a little closer to them than I am.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Brockville — I said out in eastern Ontario. East of Toronto is eastern Ontario, because I'm from Niagara region. Please.

We've seen the loss of real jobs. I'll tell you what. We've seen more labour dispute in the last two and a half years than you've seen in the whole five years when Bill 40 had currency here in Ontario. We've seen some of the

nastiest and meanest and hardest, heavy-fisted approaches by bosses like Conrad Black of the St Catharines Standard — Conrad Black, Tubby Black, gobbling up newspapers as if it was kibble, and what does he do with the workers in those papers? He beats them into shape, all right.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: That's why they call him Tubby. He beats them into shape, all right. Look at the attitude that Conrad Black has taken towards his workers at the St Catharines Standard. In 107 years of that newspaper's history, there has never been a strike action taken by workers. You know its history. You know the history of the St Catharines Standard. Of course you do. Everybody who reads in southern Ontario is aware of that. It was a long-time family-owned paper, the Burgoyne family. There were disagreements between the editorial staff or the other working women and men at the newspaper and the publishers — of course there were — but they've always been resolved.

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The St Catharines Standard of course has been on strike since Thursday, May 21, and folks down in the Niagara region are simply boycotting it, because people in St Catharines and across Niagara don't tolerate and will not tolerate the heavy-handedness and the malicious threatening of Conrad Black. Did you read the comments he made apparently yesterday that were reported in this morning's newspaper? Conrad Black made it quite clear that there were going to be no meaningful negotiations with those skilled, trained, hardworking editorial staff at the St Catharines Standard.

Let me explain to you how it's going to work and why it's so crucial that the community support the 31 editorial employees. Editorial employees — I know you know that, Speaker, and I know the folks here know — doesn't mean editors. It means the people who work in the news-writing department as compared to the people selling advertising or the people working the presses or the people doing circulation and distribution. Those 31 employees have been negotiating for months. For months they're been trying to hammer out an agreement.

Let me tell you what the primary issue is. Tubby Black, Conrad — because that's what Barbara calls him. Maybe she calls him Tubby too behind his back, or to his face; who knows? Tubby Black is demanding of those workers that they have a two-tiered system of wages, not an uncommon phenomenon. It's a profitable newspaper. It makes money. He doesn't want his workers, the ones who create the wealth, to have any share of it. One of the observations you can make about the nature of wealth in this province, increasingly so with the advent of the Tories at Queen's Park, is that the people who create the wealth are inevitably never the wealthy. Think about that.

Editorial staff, along with their colleagues working in other departments of the newspaper, are what make the profits for Southam News, owned by Conrad Black, which owns the St Catharines Standard. It's been a profitable newspaper.

In the last two years since Conrad Black bought Southam and the St Catharines Standard, he's reduced staff by 25%. Gone. You call that job creation? It's job losses. Get it straight. Reducing staff by 25%, a profitable newspaper, slashing by 25%, one quarter of the staff gone, out on the streets and no jobs to go to.

Despite those record profits and already slashing, dumping, 25%, one fourth, of its staff out on to the street like so much refuse — “Be gone. Out of my way. Let them eat cake,” Conrad Black may well have said. “Be gone with you. I'm making profits and I can make even more if I reduce staff by 25%,” and he threw them out on the streets. That's not job creation. That's called job loss.

Then in the pursuit of a new contract, Conrad Black demands of those remaining workers that they sign a contract that would provide wage levels 9% to 12% lower for beginning workers, creating a two-tiered system. You know what that means, don't you? It's not dissimilar to what's happening to teachers here in the province today.

I'm going to talk about teachers in just a minute because 150 public high school teachers in the Niagara board just got their pink slips, 152 teachers in the Niagara board of education just got their pink slips, and that's in addition to 200 who are retiring and ain't gonna be replaced. That's a loss of over 300 teachers.

We'll get to the teachers in just a minute. I want to finish talking about Southam News and the St Catharines Standard and why it's so important that the people of St Catharines and across Niagara region simply refuse to buy that paper.

You see, this reduction in wages that's being demanded by Conrad Black, that's being forced by Conrad Black on his employees — they're the ones who make the money. They're the ones who make the profit. This concession of reduced wages — not stable wages, reduced wages — indeed puts the St Catharines Standard workers behind the workers of other Southam newspapers. What's happening here is the race to the bottom. You understand, Speaker? It's the race to the bottom. Once he forces the St Catharines Standard editorial staff to accept lower wages, then he goes over to Brantford — he owns that one too — and says, “You're going to make less as well.” It's that race to the bottom. That's the Mike Harris economy. That's this brave new world order that this government endorses, encourages and nurtures. It's the race to the bottom.

Conrad Black wants to compel his workers to enter into gag orders, to force them to agree not to speak publicly on issues that affect them and their families. He has absolutely abandoned the concept of skilled trades within the news business. I know you're familiar with that, Speaker, because you've been in the news yourself from time to time. Some of it's been flattering, some of it's been less than flattering, but that's the chance we take in this business. That's right.

Conrad Black is stealing a page from CITY-TV with their videographers. He doesn't respect the talents of — and I know the photographers at the St Catharines Standard: highly trained, highly skilled, professional photogra-

phers. He wants to see them gone too and to simply equip each reporter with one of those little Pentax 1000s and eliminate the role of photographer at the newspaper. He doesn't care about community newspapers and how valid and important and significant the St Catharines Standard has been to the growth of St Catharines and the Niagara region and to families generation after generation in the city of St Catharines and beyond.

That's why it's imperative that folks down in Niagara boycott, simply don't buy, the St Catharines Standard. If you've got to read the obituaries, do like I do. I go to Denistoun variety over at Denistoun and West Main. Denistoun variety used to be a Becker's or an Avondale but was bought by some real good people, Sangbok and his family. His wife and his son Jay run the store. They work there, and they work hard too, let me tell you, from 7 in the morning until 11 or 11:30 at night. Do like I do: Go over to Denistoun variety at the corner of West Main and Denistoun in Welland, pick up the Standard, look at the sections you want to look at, fold the paper neatly and put it back. The variety store owner really won't mind. Don't buy the paper. Just read it real quick, refer to the sections you want to refer to — if it's the obits, refer to the obits — fold it, put it back. You can have the best of both worlds. The fact is there isn't too much left in the Standard anyway, because it's a scab paper. It's a scab newspaper.

You won't even have to go to the corner store and sneak a look at the wedding announcements or the obituaries or what have you, because beginning May 30 and through to May 31, a newspaper called the Independent is going to be distributed to every resident of St Catharines, to every household in St Catharines, absolutely free: the Independent, written, composed and published by those very same writers from the St Catharines Standard, and it's free, no charge. It's going to have obituaries, it's going to have news, it's going to have editorial comment. You won't have to pay a dime and you will be assisting hardworking, skilled professionals, the editorial staff of the St Catharines Standard, in fighting back on one of the meanest, mean-spiritedest, greediest — Conrad Black and greedy are synonymous — people who exist in our society. I'm boycotting the Standard, and I hope that every single resident of Niagara region does.

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If you don't think working people should have decent wages, then I guess you shouldn't boycott the Standard. If you don't think that people should have the right to organize into trade unions, like this government, I suppose you should go ahead and buy the Standard. If you don't believe that the right to refuse to work in the course of unsuccessful contract negotiations is fundamental, then I suppose you should go ahead and buy a St Catharines Standard. But if you believe in any of those things, if you believe in the right of people to collectively bargain and the right to organize into trade unions, the right to not work to give effect to some meaningful negotiations, then I urge you, Speaker, and I'm confident you will, and I urge

the people in the Niagara region to simply not buy the St Catharines Standard.

That's the loudest, clearest message that Conrad Black could ever get. Do you know why? Because it's the kind of message Conrad Black understands. The only thing Conrad Black understands is the buck, the almighty dollar. That's it for Connie Black. He doesn't care about families, doesn't care about communities, doesn't care about a newspaper that has a magnificent 107-year history, doesn't care about his skilled working editorial staff. All he's interested in is the almighty buck, and if you want to talk to Conrad Black you've got to talk in his language. You do that by standing beside the St Catharines Standard workers and by not buying a scab newspaper, not buying the St Catharines Standard.

Don't forget, the Independent is going to be distributed beginning May 30, totally free to every household in the St Catharines Standard reading area. It's going to be written by those same staff persons, Vince Rice and others, who have been providing good news coverage for a long time now.

How does that tie into Bill 22? I'm going to tell you. The connection is really pretty clear. We're witnessing the drive towards a lower-wage economy. You see, the government talks about the jobs it has created. The problem is that we haven't seen any hard data; neither have the government backbenchers. We've heard numbers — my goodness, today the line was 400,000. What do you guys do, just pick a number out of the air, whatever seems to have some spin or some coin that day?

Come on. There are no hard data. You people know that. Your claims about job creation clash with the reality of so many unemployed people who remain unemployed out there living in increasing desperation in every community in this province. The reason people are forced on to welfare — by God, it's not because they want to live on welfare. It's because they don't have any work, because this government hasn't come close to fulfilling its promise to create 725,000 new jobs. You remember that promise — not close.

This government is collaborating with the high-unemployment policies of Ottawa. Look at the crisis we had in this country back in the fall of 1997. There was a crisis in Canada, and it was a crisis to which governments promptly responded, especially the federal government. Unemployment stood a chance of dropping below 9%. That was a crisis, and what did the government do, along with the Bank of Canada? They raised interest rates. God forbid that unemployment should drop below 9%. That's exactly what the increase in interest rates was a response to. The government was unashamed in its acknowledgement of that: the fear that there might be some economic growth.

Who drives that? I'll tell you, one of the sectors that drives this high interest rate policy, one that perpetuates unemployment and maintains unemployment at that level of 8% to 10% that we're suffering from in the Niagara region and across most of Ontario, one of the big players in that whole scenario is one of the biggest profit-makers

this province and this country have seen now, for the third year in a row. It's your good old CIBC and Toronto-Dominion Bank and Royal Bank of Canada and Bank of Montreal, and the list goes on.

Look what has happened in Mike Harris's Ontario. Banks enjoy bigger and bigger profits. We're not talking millions any more, we're talking billions — billions of dollars in new profits. How do the banks respond? After they pop the champagne corks and have a few themselves out of their little Waterford — I guess they drink out of Waterford crystal. Would they? I don't know what kind of crystal they drink from, but it sure as heck ain't the stuff you get at the drive-in movies when you go there and try to get your plate collection together. They've got the Waterford crystal and the champagne, so after they celebrate their huge profits with the champagne and the Waterford crystal, they start planning how they can lay off yet more employees.

That's how the banks have responded to huge new profits. They're no different from Connie Black. How does Conrad Black respond to profits down at the St Catharines Standard? He lays off — no, he fires 25% of his staff and then tells the rest of them that they've got to take lower wages. And how do the banks respond? They destroy more and more jobs within the banking industry and try to sell the public — Mbanx, my foot — on electronic banking: do it over the phone and use the ABM and the auto teller.

I'm a big fan of the credit union movement. If you're really sick and tired, as most people are, of the banks gouging and ripping you off and scamming you and taking you every chance they can get, robbing you blind — I mean, crooks don't rob banks any more; they own them.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Well, think about it. Crooks don't rob banks, they own them. If you really want to stop being gouged, want to hold on to a couple of more bucks than you would have had otherwise, tell the banks to go pound salt and go to a credit union. I go to the Atlas and Civic Employees' Credit Union down in Welland. The Atlas and Civic Employees' Credit Union is no slouch when it comes to automation, but they haven't displaced one worker in their branches as a result of introducing and getting in tune with the new technology. Their membership wouldn't let them; I'm convinced of that. They are the antithesis of what the banks are because they're owned by their membership.

I told you a year or year and a half ago about how the Toronto-Dominion Bank here in Toronto robbed me blind. They did. I told you that story. I'd left a couple of hundred bucks in that account, then went back a couple of years later and I owed them \$1.45. It was service charges. It was a savings account, for Pete's sake. They robbed me blind. They fleeced me. I would have far sooner been mugged on the street. At least I could have confronted my assailant. These guys did it in the secrecy of the bowels of a computer. Honest, I had 200 or 300 bucks. It was gone. "What happened to my money?" "Well, service." "Service charges for what?" It was a savings account.

That was the Toronto-Dominion Bank. I asked them then, "Please" — well, I didn't say "please," quite frankly. How polite would you have been under the circumstances? I didn't say "please." I acknowledge that. I wanted to. I should have said "please," so let's pretend I did: "Please, would you send me an accounting of what happened to my money over the course of the last two years?" They promised, and of course I haven't seen anything in the mail. They robbed me. The Toronto-Dominion Bank stole some 200 or 300 bucks that I'd — you think you keep your money there for safekeeping.

I talked about this a year and a half ago. I already tore a strip off them. They don't care. They already got all my money. They stole it. It paid for two or three of those Waterford stem glasses that they drink the champagne out of in the back boardrooms after they announce huge new record profits. And none of us on this side even got an invite.

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Hon Mrs Marland: You know, they can't put the Waterford in the dishwasher.

Mr Kormos: They don't use dishwashers; they've got workfare recipients to wash their dishes for them. I have no doubt about that.

We know the solution to the banks, and that's to invest in credit unions. Down in Welland we've got a whole bunch of credit unions. Niagara Credit Union has grown to enormous proportions.

We were talking about the drive towards a low-wage economy, sustained by high interest rates and perpetuated by fiscal policies which are endorsed, and not just endorsed and not just bought into, but which are — I confess I've read Linda McQuaig, okay? I tell you, if you haven't, you should. You don't have to take everything she says for gospel truth, but there's some stuff she writes about that's just so consistent with what you've read about in a dozen other sources that it's inevitably the truth, and nobody has contradicted it.

Read Linda McQuaig and read a little bit about the flim-flammy that took place in Ottawa when it came to that so-called fall of 1997 crisis where unemployment stood a chance of dropping below 9% and the Bank of Canada responded — to great applause by the banks — by raising interest rates. Higher interest rates mean higher unemployment. You know that; everybody in this province knows that. Who profits from higher interest rates? Think about it. The people who lend the money benefit from higher interest rates, and they're the ones who seem very much to be in control.

Bill 22 is part and parcel of this. I can't remember how many pieces of legislation we got up to before the House prorogued. Was it 200-and-change? It was something akin to that. It was like putting a puzzle together; some were tiny little pieces and you couldn't identify what they were part of but just had a shade, and some were bigger pieces and a little more substantial. Bill 26 was very much a cornerstone of that puzzle, because the picture starting getting clearer and clearer. Now here we are at Bill 22 after sitting for, what, three weeks now, and this goes far

beyond the mere exclusion of workfare participants from the Employment Standards Act legislation. It speaks to a far broader agenda on the part of this government.

We have already witnessed twice in this House a private member's resolution from a Tory backbencher and a private member's bill by a Tory backbencher that would have revoked, in both instances, the Rand formula. These people have a sad recollection of history. These people refuse to understand or they simply hold in disdain the history of working people and their struggle to acquire the right to organize and to join trade unions and to collectively bargain. Twice we have seen that in this Legislature now, both from Tory backbenchers.

What was interesting about it was that even the capo de tutti capi, even the Tories, didn't show up to vote on it. I don't know for sure — I was going to speculate — but clearly they didn't see it as in their best interests at that point in time.

But this isn't a bill by some crummy backbencher which is destined to fail; this comes right from the minister herself. Ms Ecker herself announced this bill. This bill went through cabinet, unlike the private member's bill and resolution that would have revoked the Rand formula. This is the real stuff. We're not just playing to the ultra-rightists out there who — we know the rhetoric. Parliamentary Assistant, I don't want to be critical of you, but I checked the Tory handbook, the lexicon, and the handbook clearly says that when you're referring to Sid Ryan and others, you don't refer to them benignly as "union leaders." You call them "those union bosses." You neglected to do that and I hope you don't get into trouble for that. That's part of the rhetoric, part of the spin.

Do you know what I brought? I brought the notes that Ms Ecker used when she announced this foul bit of work in the House. Here it is. Remember what she said? It was oh so clever, too clever for words. You guys didn't write this stuff, did you? It was none of those back there. I suspect it was the high-priced, \$1,000-a-day consultants who did this one. The language was just wild. Unfortunately, it lost credibility, even with many of the Tory faithful out there among the public: "Union opposition will not deflect us from our goal." Boy, them's tough words: "We're gonna kick butt, kick those unions' butts."

Using the words "the labour bosses," is trying to create division between labour leadership and the membership. Well, let me tell you something: Sorry, that don't cut it. What Ms Ecker and this government have done with this bill, this anti-union, anti-collective-bargaining, anti-strike bill, with all due respect to the leaders in the labour movement, has solidified labour in a way that no labour leader himself or herself ever could. I suppose we should be grateful, because this government has galvanized unionized workers out there and united them. This government finally showed its hand, finally demonstrated what its agenda really was all about.

Think about this: You don't need this bill if so-called workfare consists of people participating in volunteer agencies doing volunteer work. You don't need it. Those people aren't covered under the relevant legislation like

the Ontario Labour Relations Act and so on. Oh, the hyperbole coming from the other side about the Heart and Stroke Foundation and others, which all of us of course support. This has nothing to do with somebody who might be volunteering with the Heart and Stroke Foundation or the Canadian Cancer Society or whatever charitable organization you want.

Workfare hasn't worked. The numbers they toss around are pure rubbish. I challenge them to come up with anything akin to legitimate documentation of anything even close to their numbers. Workfare hasn't worked, isn't working and quite frankly won't work. This government has every intention, because that's what Bill 22 is all about, of forcing workfare into the private sector. It won't have to force the hand of the private sector, but you heard what some folks have said about it, that it very much will force the poorest people in our society to work for sub-minimum wage and, in the course of doing that, is going to displace workers who have been working in those same workplaces at real jobs with hopefully real wages.

What do I mean? You've already heard about the American experience, where there has been significant job loss because of the displacement by those workers of so-called workfare. They're not participants. No. You participate in something when you do it willingly and voluntarily. Otherwise, it's forced labour, nothing more and nothing less. No other language could be appropriate.

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We know what the response of the working people has been. There's a return to chain gangs. We know that labour is going to resist this attack on real jobs, and even minimum wage. We talked about this low-wage economy and the dissent, that race to the bottom. We're talking now about creating a subminimum-wage-level job, that old two-tier thing. What we're going to see, and why this legislation is crucial, is we're going to see any number of private sector employers that don't have a particular demand for highly skilled work buying into workfare all of a sudden in a way that it hasn't been bought into yet, knowing that they can displace workers, not have to pay any wages at all, and that they'll have a set of employees who are disintitled, who are denied the right to collectively bargain, to even form a union.

If you want to talk about what that means, let's go to some of the southern states which I know are such models held in the highest regard by the Tory members of this government, places like Arkansas, where for all intents and purposes there is no minimum wage. What has that got to do with high levels of unemployment? You've got to maintain high levels of unemployment if you're going to increase what Ms McQuaig calls the level of desperation. You've got to maintain high levels of unemployment if you're going to force would-be workers to compete more and more aggressively for lower- and lower-paying jobs. This is the most shortsighted thing you've ever seen.

Don't these people get it, that down where I come from there are a whole lot of small businesses that depend on there being decently paid working people in the factories, in the retail stores, in the shops and so on? Low-paid,

subminimum-wage workers don't buy shoes at the local shoe store. They don't buy refrigerators over at Don Hammond appliances up on Niagara Street. They don't buy shoes over at Elio's Shoes & Repair in downtown Thorold. They don't go into the haberdasher and buy new suits and new shirts. These people aren't consumers. They're also not very significant taxpayers.

The people where I come from have struggled so hard to build, call it what it is, a high-wage economy, a high-wage economy that's been able to sustain small business and that's been able to sustain social programs and health care and decent education — publicly funded. They know that the attack on those things is part and parcel of the drive towards lower and lower wages. That's very much what Bill 22 is part and parcel of. Remember what I told you. We heard the protestations, how dare we suggest that Bill 160 — I told you, the pieces of the puzzle. Bill 160 is yet another piece of the puzzle. The picture is getting clearer and clearer. The pieces are falling together.

Let me remind you again. Let me be very parochial. Ontario is a great province, but I love the Niagara region. You know that. I was born there and raised there. I was born in Crowland as a matter of fact. I grew up in Crowland. Niagara region will lose 200 teachers by retirement, not one to be replaced, and another 152 being fired, gone. That's not job creation. What are these guys talking about? You destroy 352 teaching positions and you call that job creation? My foot. That's increasing unemployment and creating more and more despair.

You talk about your tax break. Some tax break. You guys have got to borrow \$5 billion a year in new dollars to finance it.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: You do. They're your numbers, not mine. You've got to borrow \$5 billion a year, plus all your cutting and hacking and slashing so that your rich friends — isn't it enough you gave them the casino in Niagara Falls at the expense of tourism? Isn't it enough that you gave your rich buddies the casino and abandoned the convention centre and the Gateway tourism project, that you've got to pick the pockets of the sick and the elderly and working people and students and the poor to finance your tax break for the richest? There are 352 teachers gone from the Niagara region.

Let me tell you about what the city of Welland had to do. I told you earlier today about how police forces have been forced into going out there and doing crass fundraising. Let me tell you what happened in the city of Welland Tuesday night. The city of Welland has been struggling to maintain a zero tax increase, what with all the downloading. The region just couldn't do it. We knew that.

Remember the day when the Ministry of Finance screwed up? We were here Thursday waiting for the numbers. Do you remember that, Ms Boyd? We sat here all Thursday waiting for the numbers. Again, screwed up, fouled up, messed up, mucked up.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): A computer glitch.

Mr Kormos: Yes, a computer glitch. That's the last refuge of the —

Mrs Boyd: The computer knew it had to come up with zero.

Mr Kormos: We looked at those numbers, and quite frankly, it was worse than many people had imagined. You've got to pay now to die in Welland. The plethora of user fees is just astounding, and that's in their struggle to maintain a so-called zero tax increase.

At the regional level the fact is the tax increase for taxpayers across Niagara region is going to be 10%, 11% or 12%. They haven't quite ironed out the numbers yet and there's just no two ways around it. They've already cut all the fat. But Wellanders aren't off the hook yet. Welland city council last night voted to increase water bills by 33%. Zero tax, call it what you will. The water bills have gone up 33%.

What's interesting is that the actual cost of purchasing water has gone up 4.8%, but the water bill's going up 33%. Let me tell you what it means. Look, I'm not crying the blues. Where I live in my old house on Bald Street — and I understand, the fact is I make a whole lot more money than a whole lot of people do. I understand that. Everybody in this place does, and I'm the lowest-paid member of this place. MPPs make significantly more money than a whole lot of people out there in the community.

But what that means for my neighbours who are retirees is an increase in water bills over the course of a year, which comes out to around \$109, \$110 a year. Peanuts, you say? No, I'm sorry, it's not peanuts. You are talking about people who have been faced with new user fees, with so-called copayments, notwithstanding all the promises that were made, who have increased transit fares because of the downloading by the province on to the municipality, in fact, the abandonment by the province of municipal transit. Gone, abandoned, you're on your own.

I'm telling you, a whole lot of seniors on fixed incomes are living on a daily basis with the real fear that their homes may not be their homes much longer. We're talking about homes they've lived in for 30, 40, 50 years, homes that they've raised their kids in, indeed raised their grandkids in. We're talking about seniors who are starting to get frail, whose physical agility just isn't what it used to be and, quite frankly, they're acknowledging, "Jeez, you know, the memory isn't as good as it used to be either."

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Do you realize how frightening it is for a senior in that position to also be confronted by the real risk of losing their home and of not knowing where they're going to go to? The senior citizens' residences are increasingly underfunded, the staff in them becomes fewer and fewer, the lineups grow longer and longer and these people live with increasing despair and fear. Surely these seniors deserve far better than that. They do. They worked too hard for too long. They worked like dogs, I'll say it again, and yes, they paid taxes.

They contributed to the common pool to build public health care and public education and build a social safety

net that was going to protect the disadvantaged, yes, and the weak and the disabled. They did it knowing that was a legacy they could leave their kids and grandkids, and this government's taken that legacy away from them and those same kids and grandkids.

Bill 22, we know what it's all about. It has so little to do with welfare reform, if you even dare call it that, and so much to do with the broader agenda of this government and its real bosses. Let's face it. This isn't a Mike Harris policy. He's simply not that clever. We understand that. This isn't a policy generated out of cabinet. Do you really think any single one of those cabinet ministers wrote Bill 26 or Bill 160 or the megacity bill? Far from it.

Mrs Boyd: Most of them haven't read it.

Mr Kormos: Most of them haven't read it. We learned that during the presentation and debate and questioning about those bills.

This bill is all about giving — and I'm not talking small business. Part of me doesn't think that these people understand small business. I grew up in a small business culture. My grandparents are small business people. I grew up working in my parents' small business from when I was 10 or 11 years old. Yes, I understand small business. I ran one myself when I ran a small law office, employing two, three, sometimes four people at a time. Don't tell me about small business.

I know the difficulties of small business and this bill has nothing to do with small business. This bill has everything to do with big corporate bosses and their agenda to maintain higher and higher levels of employment. You increase that level of desperation, you get unemployed workers literally fighting, competing for scarcer and scarcer jobs, you drive wages lower and lower, and profits go up and up.

Is that the kind of province, is that the kind of society you want to live in? I am sure there are some who would say yes, but I tell you, it's not the kind of province or the kind of society or the kind of community most of the folks I know want to live in, where corporate profits climb, unemployment climbs with it and where real wages drop and where young people are increasingly denied access to post-secondary education so they'll never have a grab at the brass ring. It's not the kind of society that our parents and grandparents worked and struggled for. By God, we know that's the Tory vision; it's certainly not ours.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Garry L. Leadston): Questions and comments?

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I am pleased to rise and respond to my colleague and neighbour the member for Welland-Thorold on the issue of Bill 22, a somewhat long but interesting speech from my colleague. I only have two minutes.

But I think you can make this issue very succinct in the two minutes, a very salient issue. The title says it very clearly, the Prevention of Unionization Act (Ontario Works), 1998, and I'm willing to let this issue stand in the court of public opinion, very clear, very plain. Should people on welfare participating in Ontario Works be able to form a union? Should that be allowed, to form a union,

potentially to go on strike, being on welfare and going on strike, to bargain for higher rates, to ask for holidays?

I think if there's someone at home watching this debate, say the nurse just finishing a shift or the GM worker who drove home tonight back to Port Colborne, they would just be perplexed that the Liberal Party is endorsing the idea of people on Ontario Works forming a union, if you look at it from the perspective of that taxpayer paying their bills almost up to half, despite our tax cuts, lots of taxes from their hard-earned dollars, going in generosity to help out those people who are disadvantaged, who may be out of work. Ontario Works is there to help them to rebuild their skills, to make connections within society, help them find work again. But I think that nurse, that GM worker, the guy who's pumping gas early in the morning as the others go into work or get up, in the doughnut shop, would just be shocked that the Liberal Party, the Dalton McGuinty Liberals, are so far on the left wing, so far out of touch on this issue.

I challenge them to respond. If they believe people on welfare should be able to unionize, to go on strike, to bargain for holidays, I just think people back home would be totally shocked.

Ontario Works makes sense. It's a success. It helps people return to work. We want to see that program expanded to help even more people. I don't think, and I think people at home agree with me, that people in Ontario Works should be able to form a union.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member for Ottawa West

Mr Cullen: It's always a delight to comment on the remarks of the member for Welland-Thorold. On this particular bill, I think he's covered a large number of issues.

This bill is the government's intent to take away a fundamental right from a class of society. One has to wonder what causes this. What is it about people who are poor that this government, for the first time in over a century, feels compelled to enact a law to stop people from using rights that any other middle-income, lower-income or upper-income person can have?

The previous speaker spoke about someone at a GM plant or a nurse, and what do these people say when they hear these comments? They look at each other and they say, "Thank goodness we have a free enough society that we can protect our pensions" — do the poor have pensions? — "that we can protect our working conditions" — the poor would love to have work — "that we can protect our jobs." The poor would love to have jobs, "Give me those jobs." This government isn't giving them any jobs whatsoever.

Some 32% of welfare cases are due to disability. Oh, they're really going to organize a union, aren't they? Some 28% of welfare cases in Ontario are single parents. The union of single parents, I can see it now. What do these people really want? Why would they organize?

Again, why doesn't this government, if it's so fearful about unions organizing, forbid the unions? It doesn't do

that. It says, "Those people who are poor cannot use a right that anyone else has."

They talk about, "Should the poor be able to go on strike?" It is laughable. What happens when you go on strike? You don't get paid. Really.

Mrs Boyd: It's always a pleasure to congratulate my friend from Welland-Thorold on the passion and the commitment that he has to people who are not well off, who need support, who need to have a strong advocate on their behalf. I'm pleased that he was able to do our leadoff speech on this bill, because this bill is about people who are probably among the most vulnerable and, yes, probably among the least friend-filled group in our society.

The member who commented from Niagara South suggested that collective action is all about going on strike. That's not what collectivism is about. Collectivism is about giving mutual support to one another so that you can ensure that you won't be exploited, so that you can be sure that your rights will be respected, so that you can be sure that your health and safety will be protected.

The whole issue of "union equals strike" is a cooked-up issue by you people. That's not what unionization is about. Any union member will tell you that strike is absolutely always the last resort, that the issue of collective action is not to enable you to go on strike but to enable you to mutually support and protect one another from exploitation by those who would exploit you.

It would be hard to find a group more exploited than this group, who have been condemned to work for the basic necessities of life, in a mandatory way, no control over where they work, no control over their working conditions and no control over the insistence of this government on their lack of worth.

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The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. I have to get your riding right, Jack. Mr Carroll from the great riding of Chatham-Kent.

Mr Carroll: Thank you, Mr Speaker, the finest part of the province of Ontario, need I add.

It's always a pleasure to listen to the member for Welland-Thorold. I still have not mastered the art of taking an hour to say what you could say in five or six minutes. But anyway, he's very good at it and he's quite entertaining to listen to.

His recollection of the committee process on Bill 142 is just a little different from mine. Right, we did go to four cities. The four cities we chose to go to were negotiated by the three parties, as is always the case, and in fact in those four cities we did find many supporters for Bill 142 and for the Ontario Works program. Our recollections are just a tad different in that respect.

But what's interesting about this whole debate is the position that our friends in the Liberal Party have taken. I can understand the member for Welland-Thorold. I understand exactly what he believes in: The whole world should be a member of a union. I understand that and I accept that that's his belief. But for the Liberals to stand up and say that they believe that people who are on welfare, on Ontario Works, should be allowed to be members of a

trade union is absolutely unbelievable. However, it is those new MM Liberals that Mr Marchese referred to this afternoon, the mushy middle, or whatever he called them. It's not unusual for them to not have any position.

I would like to suggest to the member for Welland-Thorold that he talk to the trade unions and say to them, "Why don't we all work together to help these people get the skills and the contacts so they can find some work?" After they've found a job, after they have work and they're out there at a paying job, then the union should come along and do the best they can to organize them. We don't mind that. But beforehand? Please, give them a chance.

Mr Kormos: I appreciate the comments of all the people. Folks, it was my speech, and they used their two minutes to dump all over the Liberals, for Pete's sake. Somebody's been reading the polls and somebody got a pep talk over the last couple of days. I don't think it's going to last, though. I've got a feeling it's not going to last.

Interruption.

Mr Kormos: That's a forewarning of what privatization of Hydro is going to do to you.

The sad thing is that this debate around Bill 142 and around Bill 22 has really missed the point. What we should have been talking about and what I urge the government members to be talking about is poverty in this province: who's poor and why they're poor. That's what warrants consideration.

We know that seniors are poor. We know that seniors are becoming increasingly poor. We know that young people are poor. We know that certain types of workers, notwithstanding that they're working, are poor. We know that women are poor. We know that students are poor. We know, certainly, that the unemployed are thrust into devastating poverty. This government has failed to address that much broader and much more important issue.

Unionization? You count on it. I believe as strongly as I could ever believe in anything that every working person, working under whatever guise, call it whatever you want, has the right to organize themselves into a trade union to collectively bargain, yes, and to put down their tools if need be. That is as fundamental a right as any Canadian could ever have, and we in the New Democratic Party will defend it with every bit of energy we have and can muster in the future.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Galt: It's certainly a pleasure for me to be able to take part in the debate on this extensive bill, Bill 22, An Act to Prevent Unionization with respect to Community Participation under the Ontario Works Act, 1997. We've heard a lot of complaints in the past from the opposition about some our bills being too long. They've called them mega-bills and a lot of other things. There is no way they can complain that this one is too long. It's sort of one fold-over page, but it's very concise and to the point.

It's extremely unfortunate that we have to bring in a bill such as this. It's about Ontario Works, about a program giving people an opportunity to finish school, to be

educated, to be trained. It's a program whereby we're asking for some 17 hours per week of community work.

What does the head of the OPSEU union, the Ontario public service union, do? He goes out and threatens that he's going to unionize these poor people who have been on welfare and want to get some experience. He wants them to pay union dues. He wants them to be in a position to go on strike. Look at some of these union dues. I don't know what they would want from people who would be on workfare, but for the teachers, it's \$1,000 or so a year that's expected for union dues. I expect they would probably try to take most of what these poor people would be getting on Ontario Works. For those 17 hours, they'd probably take all the revenue they're getting in.

Anyway, here's this union after dues. It's just beyond my comprehension. Consequently, we have this very concise and idealistic bill that we're bringing in at this time called Bill 22. If you look at it, the people we're talking about and protecting with this bill are not employees. Even if Sid Ryan thinks they're employees, even if the NDP thinks they're employees, even if the Liberal Party — Dalton McGuinty — thinks they're employees, they're not employees in the truest sense. They're not even there as part-time staff.

They're there to get some experience and do a worthwhile job. There's no more satisfaction than to be able to do something that's worthwhile, get up in the morning and have a purpose to go and do something. That's why so many have been caught in the past in the vicious circle of welfare, where they don't feel that life is worth anything any more. When they go and apply for a job, of course the employers ask them: "And where have you worked? What does your résumé say?" There's a great big blank space on the résumé where they haven't been working. This is about filling in, giving a spot on that résumé for what they've been doing and having an employer, a person they have worked with, give them a recommendation and a reference. A reference is so important and that's what most employers are looking for: job experience and a positive recommendation from an employer or a person they have been associated with.

This workfare, or Ontario Works, is all about fairness, accountability and transition.

Mr Cullen: How can it be fair?

Mr Galt: Let me tell you why it's fair. In your government, the Liberal government, all you did was give extra to the welfare people. What happened while your party was in government from 1985 to 1990 was the welfare rolls climbed significantly, went way off. All you have to do is look back in the records and you'll see that's what happened. That was in the good times when there was lots of money out there. Of course you bragged about balancing the budget, when in fact, when the NDP got a look at it, you didn't balance it at all. You were just juggling hundreds of millions of dollars around to try to make it look good, when in fact that wasn't the case.

Mrs Boyd: Sounds familiar doesn't it, Doug? Just like you.

Mr Galt: I know the member from London would fully agree with that because she was in cabinet at that time and noticed how the books had been fixed. However, the following government, from 1990 to 1995, came along with two sets of books. I don't know which would be worse, juggling the figures around or having two sets of books, but at least I'm pleased to report to the people of Ontario that there is only one set of books for the province of Ontario. That's all the Honourable. Ernie Eves, Minister of Finance, operates with. We also returned the \$60 million to the northern Ontario heritage fund that somewhere or other disappeared during the last term. I have no idea where it went, but it has been returned. That's the fairness I wanted to come back to, that we're talking about in Ontario Works.

This government is very fair in how it deals with people on welfare, how it deals with Ontario Works and how it deals with even the opposition at times. It's also very accountable, to give these people the opportunity to be back to work. What could be more accountable than coming up with approximately 400,000 jobs in the first three years in office? I think that is just absolutely tremendous. From February 1997 to February 1998 we came up 265,000 net new jobs, which is a provincial record. Never before in the history of Ontario had that many jobs been created in this province. That's accountability of a government.

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Coming back to this fairness and accountability, this is a transition. Ontario Works, having people going out and getting experience, is all about transition from being on welfare, a situation which most people feel is pretty hopeless. They're distraught. They want out of it. We're giving them the opportunity for the transition from that category into a working category where I'm sure most, if not all, of the people caught in that trap really want to be.

It's about hope, it's about opportunity and it's about growth. Hope for the future: It must be pretty depressing to be sitting at home, drawing welfare and having no hope for the future and where you are going to end up. We've had some working in my office and the hope — they're so excited about it and they get jobs because of that experience. It provides that kind of opportunity and they're pleading regularly for opportunities.

There are certainly far more people looking for these job placements than there are placement positions out there, and the reason those opportunities are not there like they should be is because of the unions attacking organizations like United Way. They're convincing the membership not to give to United Way if United Way should use somebody from welfare to help a little bit in their office and learn some computer techniques. They just don't want to give them the opportunity, I guess, to get out and become part of the worthwhile work community.

It's also an opportunity for growth, for the community as well as for the inner self. Just having different jobs and experiences is really an opportunity for growth of the inner self.

It's interesting to observe how the NDP, the Liberals and the union supporters seem to be opposed to absolutely everything as it relates to change. I know that change is stressing. I know it's bothersome. I know it's difficult to handle. But really you should be up for the challenge because it's good fun to change things and make things happen and get on with life.

Education reform is one good example that they just couldn't handle. We brought in a bill like Bill 160 that just had so many good things in it, looking at classroom size and keeping more dollars in the classroom and on the list goes, and you people resisted it. You just couldn't handle a little bit of change for the better. It certainly is change for the better. Teachers are realizing that and coming to me right now, saying: "Thanks for putting that bill through. We really appreciate that it's now in place and things are now being looked after."

I've been sitting here listening to some of the debate and I've come up with a definition of how you run a government. A government is run, in my opinion, by a Premier like we have who has a vision. He's leading with a vision. He's guiding. He knows where this province should go and we're going in the right direction, there's just no question. We have a cabinet and a caucus that have their foot firmly on the accelerator. We're making this vehicle go and it's going places with the Premier steering, leading and guiding.

Then we have the unions in this province with their foot firmly on the brake, trying to hold us back, trying to resist.

Then of course we have the opposition and the third party with eyes firmly fixed on the rear-view mirror, and they really couldn't care less who the car happens to run over. They're trying to drive and give directions as critics, looking at the rear-view mirror, trying to see where they've been and not looking ahead.

That's one of the problems that the public is having currently with the official opposition and the third party, that they're not coming up with alternatives. They're looking at yesteryear and not paying any attention to where we're going and what the public needs and wants and should be having. They have no vision. They're still looking in that rear-view mirror, looking out behind to see where they've been and remembering yesteryear, and it's most unfortunate.

It really comes back simply to the NDP, the third party, the old saying, "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem." Obviously, in this case, you're not part of the solution. I guess you fall into the other category of still being part of the problem, similar to the unions holding things back.

I hope the kind of thing that's going on will not happen here. I just read recently about the drywallers' strike and the destruction of houses as they work with this strike. It's extremely distressing. The union leaders say, "Oh no, we don't support that kind of thing," but what it says in the paper is: "Guess who's out there? Guess who's creating damage to these homes?" Far be it from me.

Anyway Ontario Works is really about a hand up, not a handout. That was a saying we had at campaign time and I

think it still holds very true, that it is a hand up; it's certainly not a handout. The people I have talked to certainly agree with that very much.

This is really all about a program of assistance. These people are well covered. It's not like yesteryear when unions had to go and provide an awful lot of protection. These people are protected by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board — it used to be the old WCB. They have that kind of protection. They have protection of the labour laws of this country. They have the protection of health and safety laws. These people in the workplace are indeed well protected in this day and age in Ontario.

This program is about an opportunity to prove oneself, to be able to prove oneself in front of a regular employer. That's what they need in their résumé, the fact that you have a proven track record. It's really about restoring self-respect. That's one of the things that happens when you get in this vicious welfare circle: You lose self-respect. It's about the dignity of a job. Human beings are biological units that really enjoy work and want to get out and work in the workplace, want to get up in the morning and feel needed. There's tremendous satisfaction in having a job and going out and doing something worthwhile. It's also very beneficial for their children as you become a role model, rather than being at home on welfare and not doing anything caught in this vicious circle.

There are large numbers of people who are saying, "Thank you for the opportunity of being involved in Ontario Works." I mentioned just a few minutes ago that there are people who want jobs, want placements, and there are not enough placements out there. The demand is greater than the supply, mainly because of the negativism that has been put on this program by the official opposition, by the third party and by the unions in this province.

A year ago I was speaking on the budget in Windsor. When I'm in another town, I like to pick up the local paper and see what's going on, what's happening. I picked up the local Windsor paper and what was on the front page but a very large picture of a woman with a young child she was picking up at school and she was interviewed about what she was doing. She was on Ontario Works. She was so pleased to be part of the Ontario Works program and to be getting experience and having that opportunity of getting into the workforce. She was saying thank you and was really pleading that more placements would be available. That's in quite a union town, I understand, in Windsor, so I find it just a little surprising when I hear comments from the third party, some of their positions, when here's a woman, front page on the daily paper in Windsor.

I think back to the lost 10 years, 1985 to 1995.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Did they find them?

Mr Galt: We're still hunting, but we know something happened because of the size of the debt. The debt tripled during that period. The budget doubled. We had the Liberals tax-and-spend, and then we had the NDP spend-and-borrow period.

What I'm really thinking about and want to come around to is, what were they doing for our people who were caught on welfare? They certainly were not in there

creating jobs. From 1990 to 1995 there was a net loss of 10,000 jobs, when across Canada during the same period there was a net gain of 400,000 jobs. Why did Ontario lose so many? I really don't know, other than the old tax-and-spend program of the Liberals. That just drove away jobs. And then we went into a recession as soon as the NDP got elected. During that 1990 to 1995 period, Ontario was really like an anchor around the rest of Canada. Now we're helping Canada and really leading it right along.

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Of course, welfare is considered as a last resort. We don't consider it a way of life. However, I think the third party, when they were in government, did consider it as a way of life. I think one of the most harmful things we did as a government — I'm talking about collectively as a government when the Liberals were in government — was overpaying welfare recipients and encouraging them that it was in fact a way of life. That was most unfortunate.

Our government is doing something about it. Ontario Works is an excellent program. There's the old saying that comes from many moons ago, I believe from the Bible, that if you give a man a fish, he'll eat for a day, but if you teach him how to fish, he'll eat for a lifetime. There's also an interesting saying — I think I mentioned it the other day but in case I didn't — an old Yiddish saying, and it goes along this line: You can't hold your head up with your hand out. That's why we consider that welfare is really a last resort, and then Ontario Works is an opportunity to escape from it.

Ontario Works is about community participation, and that's what we've really been talking about here. It's about employment support and it's about employment placement. We're talking about the opportunity for work experience, the opportunity for a job search, for basic education and for developing job-specific skills.

We've heard a lot from the critics here this evening, and of course in the past over the last three years, that Ontario Works is going to displace people from regular jobs, and maybe they can list off some of those.

I think the member for Chatham-Kent just had an excellent speech. He was pointing out that once these people are trained, then they get jobs and can join the union in some of those jobs. You would think the unions would be very enthused because they can expand their role and expand the dollars — I suppose \$1,000 a year that they would be taking in when these people get a good job.

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): That's the union steward.

Mr Galt: They might even get a job as a union steward.

As came out earlier, the kinds of threats that come from these organizations are really unfortunate, suggesting that they take support away from organizations like the Heart and Stroke Foundation. I personally am experienced and involved with the United Way and know how they have threatened the United Way. They really bucked anything the United Way was doing. They didn't want donations

given if the United Way was to give one of the people on welfare the opportunity to develop some experience.

There were some comments made earlier, especially from the official opposition, quoting Dalton McGuinty. I made reference earlier that I thought we would hear from the member for Ottawa West when he spoke and when he had his response I thought he might explain to me "mandatory opportunity." I'm still waiting for an explanation on "mandatory opportunity." I'm sure that when they get a chance to respond after I sit down they will explain "mandatory opportunity" to me. It's in the red book, it's still there, right in this book.

Mr Baird: We have a copy right here.

Mr Galt: We have a copy here. It talks about, for welfare recipients, that you'll require "mandatory opportunity."

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak. I look forward with great anticipation to the explanation on "mandatory opportunity."

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Cullen: I'm glad to have this opportunity to participate and comment on the member for Northumberland's remarks. We heard a lot of self-justification, a lot of self-rationalization for a program that after three years is still not off the ground, is still not functioning, is still actually doomed for failure.

Why is Ontario Works doomed to failure? We hear the justification, how it's a wonderful program, how it's a hand up and not a handout, and yet we know after three years that the Association of Municipalities of Ontario continues to oppose the program. We know after three years that many community organizations and charities continue to oppose the program.

I hear the member opposite speak about the Heart and Stroke Association. I can tell the member opposite that the Heart and Stroke Association of Ottawa-Carleton, along with many other charitable organizations and social service agencies, refuses to participate in this program. Why? Because they do not believe in enforced employment for the vulnerable in our community. What they believe this government should be doing is focusing on job creation to help out the vulnerable in our community. This has not been the government's objective.

The government's objective since day one, since the Common Sense Revolution, is to reduce benefits to the poor in our community and to bring into place a program called workfare. Yet today we've had the minister go down to the United States to find out what went wrong. After three years, we find the municipalities still in opposition and we find the community agencies still in opposition. So what did this government do? "Oh, bread and circuses distract the public. We're going to stop those unions from organizing the very poor in our community. We're going to stop them from going on strike." Can you imagine that, people who are poor on strike?

Mrs Boyd: I always want so much to be able to respond to the member for Northumberland, because every time he gets up he shows what an ideologue he really is.

This is all about your insistence on treating people who require social assistance as if they have to be forced to work. You said yourself that they want to work, that they want jobs. You didn't have to force them to work. There are many ways in which the government could have provided the kind of job experience that you say is what people want. In fact we know from our experience with Jobs Ontario, we know from our experience with placements from adult education, co-op programs and so on, that voluntary placement doesn't enrage unions at all. They work side by side with people who are voluntarily placed. You know that some of the best mentors for people who were placed through Jobs Ontario or who are placed through college or school placements are union members.

This is about forced labour. This is about the fact that this is mandatory. This is about the fact that you are forcing people into this situation. Yes, indeed, some may benefit from that, but the whole issue that has been an issue all along is the fact that this is a forced program. The number of people who have been forced into this program is probably less than you would have had if it were voluntary, and certainly the community agencies would not be having the problem, the ethical problem, that they have accepting these placements, because it's forced labour.

Hon Mrs Marland: I haven't had the privilege until this evening of hearing the member for Ottawa West speaking and I can almost understand why he's speaking in the vein he is, because it certainly sounds to me as though he's going to walk right across the aisle here and join the New Democratic Party. I guess he's going to join the New Democratic Party because after yesterday's vote his leader probably doesn't want him at —

Mr Cullen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The standing orders, rule 23(i), forbid members from imputing or avowing motives. I've been a Liberal for 25 years and I'm very happy where I am.

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The Acting Speaker: Please continue.

Hon Mrs Marland: Of course the member for Ottawa West may be very happy where he is; I'm sure that perhaps the leader of his party isn't happy where he is sitting.

It's interesting to listen to the Liberals in their pious argument, and particularly from the member for Ottawa West, because in their red book they talk about, and I quote, "However, when people who are able to work refuse to participate in any of these programs, they will receive only a basic allowance that reflects the national average and is less than the current allowance."

It's very interesting because when someone like the member for Ottawa West does what he did yesterday, which was very obvious, that he was voting against the unity of our wonderful country, and then has the gall to stand up and try to make the argument he's making today against a very fair and just bill, he must be an embarrassment to everybody in the party.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): We're getting a little bit precious in this. It's dangerous territory into which the member for Mississauga South ventures, because when you start talking about last night, it forces

me to start to look across and see how many members of the Conservative caucus were not here to vote for it. I didn't want to do that, I really didn't. Last night I think was a very conciliatory night. I did something last night. On behalf of the government House leader, I moved a motion that would have been difficult for the government House leader to move. Yet I hear you now talking about last night and who voted how. If all the members in the House were present, I would venture to say there might have been people in each of the political parties who might have had some difficulty with it. I would have thought it was very dangerous.

Hon Mrs Marland: Every member of our party voted for it. The member for St Catharines knows it.

Mr Bradley: Even Mr Vankoughnet would have, would he?

I just think when you venture into that territory, I just say to the member when she ventures into that territory, it becomes very difficult when you see the number of people who were absent.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Madam Minister, could I have some order?

Hon Mrs Marland: I am just speaking to my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Bradley had the floor. You did not.

Hon Mrs Marland: I am not speaking to Mr Bradley.

The Acting Speaker: I'm not going to argue with you. Mr Bradley, do you want to continue?

Mr Bradley: The one aspect I wanted to look at that I think has been neglected in this is that I think many of us met with the representatives of the disabled community last week, who met with as many members of the Legislature as they could to talk about their job opportunities. What I'm looking for in terms of this program is legislation that the Premier promised and that I hope the government will deliver within the next period of time, which would help disabled people to get into the workforce. There was a passing reference to it in the budget; however, those people out there are very concerned that they're going to be shut out of opportunities to enter the workforce. I don't think this bill solves that problem.

Mr Galt: It's a pleasure for me to respond to the various comments, particularly the member for Mississauga South. I thank her for her thoughtful comments. She was commenting that the member for Ottawa West might just as well walk across the aisle and join the NDP, but I don't think he would get in, they're quite discriminatory about who they let into their party. I see a lot of heads shaking over there in the NDP, the third party. I can understand why you would be discriminatory and wouldn't want somebody in that would have such a definitive statement as "mandatory opportunity," which he still hasn't explained to us. Although the member for Mississauga South did quite a good job reading from the red book, and we find out it may not be pressure, that they may have an opportunity, but if they don't take part, they get a very

basic allowance. It really drops down. I guess that's what mandatory opportunity is really about.

I noticed the member for St Catharines started to talk about the member for Mississauga South entering into dangerous territory. I thought he was referring to her reading the red book, because that certainly is dangerous territory to enter into. I would have agreed with him if he had pursued that particular point.

I always appreciate the thoughtful responses and comments of the member for London Centre. She is very concerned about force or pressure. This is about getting experience, this is about opportunities, and she's saying, "We can't force people." You encourage. You get them out. She says, "Make it voluntary." Well, it was voluntary all through your term in office, it was voluntary through the opposition's term in office, and look what happened. The rolls went way, way up.

We are doing something very constructive, very worthwhile, and it's really working.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Ottawa West.

Mr Cullen: Thank you, Mr Speaker. "Ottawa West is the best."

I'm engaging and participating in a debate dealing with Bill 22, in second reading here, was offered by the government just last week, where we had the unusual circumstance, on first reading — we normally give the courtesy of allowing a bill to be introduced for first reading, but we found this House being forced through a vote because of the absolute repugnance of this legislation.

What is so repugnant about this legislation that it requires a division on first reading and the opposition we're seeing today leading into second reading? Hopefully, we will not see this bill live past second reading.

This is An Act to Prevent Unionization with respect to Community Participation under the Ontario Works Act, 1997. This was moved by the Honourable Janet Ecker, Minister of Community and Social Services.

What this bill does is give authority to this government to ensure that people who have to participate in workfare, which this government has legislated — against tremendous opposition across the province, this government has legislated that people who are to receive welfare benefits must participate in workfare. That bill was introduced and passed some time ago. It was a promise in the Common Sense Revolution back in the 1995 election.

Workfare itself, the very program this government has introduced, has yet to find itself on its feet. It has yet to be in full operation three years after talking about it, after introducing legislation to require people to participate in it, three years after this government has heard from the people who have to manage the program: the municipalities, the regions and the counties that administer the welfare system in our province, who have said repeatedly, to a person, to an organization, that they're opposed to this kind of legislation. We're not talking about special interest groups. We're not talking about social service agencies. We're not talking about advocates for social causes. We're talking about the men and women who are elected

to represent property taxpayers at the local level, and to a person, they have opposed this legislation.

On top of this, from the overwhelming majority of the agencies that form the United Way, that do the volunteer work in our communities, the message they've given consistently and persistently to this government is, "No, we do not want to participate in a program that we feel violates the rights of the poor and impoverished, who cannot help themselves."

So we have a program here that's not getting very far, that's not working. And what did this government do back on May 14? On May 14, the government introduced legislation, Bill 22, that for the first time in the history of this province will deprive such a large class of people of their rights as guaranteed under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms: the freedom of association.

I have to ask, what would prompt a government like this to bring in such draconian legislation so that the poor could not go on strike? We know what happens to anyone else who goes on strike. When the teachers go on strike, do they get paid? No, they don't. When employees in an auto plant go on strike, do they get paid? No, they don't. That is why when we have labour negotiations with our unions, over 96% of unions end up settling their disputes at the table and we do not have strikes. In a sector where we have unions, it is absolutely amazing that the overwhelming majority of these negotiations, the overwhelming majority of the conduct between employer and employee — we do not have strikes.

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But this government wants to ban strikes among the poor if they participate in Ontario Works. It boggles the mind. I cannot imagine that when this proposal came to cabinet there wasn't a memorandum to the minister from the bureaucrats who serve the people of Ontario, saying, "Note to Minister: Minister, please be aware that this proposed legislation violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms." I cannot help but think that somebody wrote that in the memo to cabinet.

Of course, we can recollect that this government is driven by political considerations. Indeed, when there was another memo to cabinet dealing with a speech from the throne about reference to a young offender, that cabinet just said, the minister's office just said — it was actually the Premier's office: "Oh, forget it. We have other fish to fry. Political considerations are important. We'll just ignore this charter obligation, this recognition that there's a law that defends the right of young offenders." But that's under investigation now by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, so we can't say anything further on that.

I cannot believe that such legislation, which would have such a clearly written memo to cabinet saying, "This offends the charter" — it's black and white, folks. I find it amazing. What is it about the poor that so frightens this government that it feels compelled to bring in such a law? It didn't ban teachers from their union, although it did try to pick on the principals and vice-principals, but we found that offensive and we opposed that. So what happens here? When we have strikes any place else, do we find this

government coming in with such legislation? No, it doesn't. Why doesn't it? Is it because the poor can't speak for themselves?

Can you imagine the poor going on strike? Can you imagine a single welfare mom with two or three kids standing up and saying, "Hell, no, I won't take that cheque"? That's what happens when you go on strike. When people are finally driven to a strike — and remember, over 96% of negotiations with unions are settled peaceably at the table, and we brag about that. When the government goes abroad and markets itself across the world as a place to invest in Ontario, it talks about how well regulated our industry is, how well educated our population is, how well run our economy is. When it comes time for a photo op for the opening of a new plant, the Premier will be there with his arm around whoever the union local president is — you bet — working together for all of Ontario. But not when it comes to the poor.

What happens here? After three years of a program that has yet to get on its feet, it brings in this piece of legislation. Why? What did the minister say? "We will not be pushed around by the unions who threaten to organize the poor, the union bosses who threaten to organize those people who would be forced to come on to Ontario Works, forced into workfare." Here's a government that's forcing people on to workfare and here are unions saying, "We would like to perhaps organize these people so they can protect their interests," and instead of the government saying, "We should stop unions from doing this," they're saying, "We should take away the rights of people who are poor for freedom of association."

I'm not following the logic here. If the idea was to stop unions from coming in — I mean, there's nothing that has stopped anyone who's receiving welfare, for over 100 years when you go back to the poor laws and everything that succeeded that, from forming a union. It's as if we have a hotbed of labour unrest among our poor. What is it when a government is so far committed to a revolution that they want to start taking away rights? Let's face it. This is a PR exercise, purely a public relations exercise so the government can try to thump CUPE or thump OPSEU or thump the OFL for daring to talk about organizing people who are struggling from day to day to pay the rent but who, because of the welfare cut, don't have enough money for rent and therefore from day to day are in the food banks and are struggling to find a job, struggling to get some employment opportunities, struggling to get some job training. That's all these folk want.

But this is bread and circuses. The government seeks to distract. It seeks to create the straw dog, the straw figure,

the straw man, if you would, by saying: "The union bosses are coming in and we're going to — wait a second. We're not going to stop unions. Oh, no. We're going to stop the poor from exercising the rights that any lawyer has, any doctor has, any civil servant has." Why doesn't this government ban unions among the civil service, for crying out loud? I'm not recommending that. Don't get me wrong. I firmly believe in the right and the freedom of association, and isn't it great that we can stand up in this House and so say? Isn't it great that here in our country we pride ourselves for being a free and tolerant country?

But we look at the side opposite and we hear them introduce farcical legislation. We know this legislation is farcical. It cannot withstand a challenge to the courts. Is there any compelling reason in a free and just, democratic society to limit these rights? An essential service? I think not; not at all. Are we talking about a situation where they're a menace to a free and democratic society? Well, my Lord, the government just crows about the declining numbers of welfare cases. It can't be that we have revolution running in the streets.

Would the exercise of their rights to join a union seriously threaten anyone else's fundamental rights? Let's see. Could they bargain for a pension? What happens when a union goes through the bargaining process and ends up with the ultimate sanction? The ultimate sanction in our collective bargaining process, which this government still adheres to, the Ontario Labour Code, the Canada Labour Code, developed after more than a century of conflict within our community, of give and take, of compromise, of recognition of collective bargaining rights, which the Minister of Labour for this government will stand up and spout for when it comes to Labour Day — for sure he talked about the value of collective bargaining.

What is the ultimate sanction when the collective bargaining process fails? The employer can lock out, right? If you're someone on welfare who does not participate in Ontario Works, you're cut off. You are cut off if you refuse to participate, for whatever reason. It's amazing. When we go through the list of what has happened to welfare recipients and how easily they can be cut off — because it's not just by not participating in the program that they can get cut off. Adult children who live with their parents can be cut off, even if they're single parents themselves and are paying rent. You'll be cut off.

The Acting Speaker: Member, I ask you take your seat.

It is now 9:30 of the clock. This House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2129.

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Thursday 28 May 1998

Jeudi 28 mai 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
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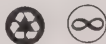
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 28 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 28 mai 1998

*The House met at 1001.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN INVOLVED IN PROSTITUTION ACT, 1998 LOI DE 1998 SUR LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS QUI SE LIVRENT À LA PROSTITUTION

Mr Bartolucci moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 18, An Act to protect Children involved in Prostitution / Projet de loi 18, Loi visant à protéger les enfants qui se livrent à la prostitution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 95(c), the honourable member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): In the foreword to the 1997 The Progress of Nations, Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, wrote in part, "The day will come when nations will be judged not by their military or economic strength, nor by the splendour of their capital cities and public buildings but...by the provision that is made for those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged; and by the protection that is afforded to the growing minds and bodies of our children." It is in that context that I would like to begin our debate today.

Why, might you ask, would I propose such legislation? During the Christmas shopping season this past year, I was hurriedly buying presents for my family at Sudbury City Centre when an everyday, average father approached me and said, "I wish you could give me the present my family most wants." Knowing him I asked, "Alan, what would that be?" He said with all the love, courage and hope a father could muster, "Legislation which would protect my child from prostitution which she is involved in now."

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a real-life example of why I bring forth this legislation today. This is a real father, a caring father, a loving father, with a real daughter involved in a real problem. My fellow colleagues, this is not only a Sudbury problem, nor is it a Toronto, Windsor or Timmins problem. This is not only a big-city problem, nor is it a small-city problem. This is a concern for all Ontarians. Sadly, it is a problem which spans borders larger than Ontario. But today we in this

Legislature have an opportunity to make a real difference in and for Ontario, a real difference for Alan and for his daughter.

The purpose of the bill is to protect children under 18 who are involved in prostitution. The bill gives police officers the power, with a warrant, to apprehend a child involved in prostitution and return the child to his or her family or to place the child in a protective safe house. The police officer may also apprehend a child without a warrant where the child's life or safety is seriously and imminently endangered.

If a child is brought to a protective safe house under this act, a child protection worker shall be responsible for the child and for determining whether to return the child to his or her parent, to a person who had care and control of the child before the child was apprehended or to another adult who is capable of providing for the child's needs. The child protection worker may also decide to apply to court for an order under section 57 of the Child and Family Services Act.

This bill would allow a child, his or her parent or a child protection worker to apply to a court for a restraining order against a person who has abused the child or who will have encouraged the child or is likely to encourage the child to engage in prostitution. The bill makes it an offence for a person to encourage a child to engage in prostitution. The penalty for the offence is a fine of up to \$25,000, imprisonment of up to 24 months or both a fine and imprisonment.

As you can see, my fellow members, this bill works in tandem or in conjunction with the Child and Family Services Act, but let me be clear: It is an act that deals solely with sexual exploitation and child abuse through prostitution. It does not conflict with but rather enhances other pieces of provincial legislation to ensure that these vulnerable and exploited children are protected.

At the March 12, 1998, International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth held in Victoria, BC, which was called Out from the Shadows, a declaration and agenda for action of sexually exploited children and youth was drafted. The conference's co-chairs Senator Landon Pearson from Ottawa, and Cherry Kingsley from Victoria, BC, a former teen prostitute who now advocates for their protection, along with the participants, concluded that not only was the realization of this problem important, but an agenda for action was necessary as well.

Their agenda was based on certain beliefs. Two of their beliefs are as follows: (1) that our laws must protect children who are sexually exploited or abused through prostitution; and (2) that we are all responsible for our

children and youth, yet the issue is not ours alone. Governments, communities and society as a whole must be held accountable for the sexual exploitation of youth.

That's why it is imperative that today we act in a caring, responsible way.

Frankly, Speaker, I am quite enthused by the strong support this bill has been shown by a cross-section of the population of Ontario. Police services across the province — to date, 21 — have sent letters of support. Let me quote from only a few.

From Chief Julian Fantino of the London Police Service:

"I have reviewed the legislation and wish to commend you for your initiative in this regard and your efforts to enhance protection for our children who are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.... Recent high-profile cases, including our project 'Guardian,' have brought this issue to the forefront. It is imperative that those who are capable of effecting positive change, especially our political leaders, appreciate and act on the critical need to improve the quality of life for one of the most vulnerable segments of our society....

"If I can be of any assistance...please contact me."

The chief from the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police Service, Brian Ford, writes:

"Sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children is all too common in our society and there is a lack in legislation for authorities to take necessary action which would be in the best interest of the child.... This legislative void has been well covered in your bill."

William Closs, the Chief of Police in Kingston, writes:

"Speaking as a parent and as a police professional, I have become saddened and shocked as to what is happening with children in our society. Child prostitution cannot be tolerated, and every effort must be made to eradicate it."

These are only a few of the many letters.

Social service groups as well as church groups throughout the province have also sent me letters of support. Let me quote from only a few.

The executive officer, Ontario Provincial Synod, the Anglican Church of Canada, the Rev Harry Huskins, writes:

"I wanted to drop you a note to thank you for your initiative...and to encourage you in pursuing this issue...this is a very difficult and complex problem....

"Please continue your initiative because it is an important one."

1010

I have letters from the Council of Elizabeth Fry Societies of Ontario and the John Howard Society. Bishop Bernard Pappin, Auxiliary Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Sault Ste Marie, writes:

"I am sure that Bishop Jean-Louis Plouffe, (who is presently in Rome), bishop of this diocese...would join me in support of your efforts to more effectively address this evil in our society."

There has been support from towns, cities and regions across Ontario for this legislation. Let me name only a

few: Regional Chair Bob Chiarelli from the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, and over the course of the last few days the city of Sudbury council and the regional municipality of Sudbury council passed resolutions in support.

Finally, is this perfect legislation? Probably not. Does it need committee work? Yes, it does. Are there flaws in it? Probably. Is it fundamentally flawed in direction or in purpose or intent? Absolutely not.

If you believe in the preamble of the legislation; if you believe that the safety, security and wellbeing of children and families is of paramount concern to all residents of Ontario; if you believe children engaged in prostitution are victims of sexual abuse and require protection; if you believe it is the responsibility of families and communities to provide that protection; if you believe it is the duty of the province to assist families and communities in providing that protection; if you believe that legislation is required to ensure the safety of all children and to assist children in ending their involvement with prostitution; if you believe that fathers like Alan and their daughters are important — and the fathers are not only in Sudbury and the daughters are not only in Toronto but they are all over this province; if you believe that we can effect change today, if you believe, I implore you to support this legislation.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I am pleased to be able to speak to the bill this morning. I am going to be joined later in this hour by Wayne Lessard, the member for Windsor-Riverside, who will be speaking to it as well.

I've got to tell you and the member, Mr Bartolucci, that his having raised this issue, his having spoken to the desperation of a family that loses a son or a daughter to the streets is certainly a legitimate and real one. It's a very visceral one. It's one, as Mr Bartolucci indicates, that isn't unique to Sudbury, isn't unique to Toronto but indeed has become increasingly pandemic.

Mr Bartolucci is quite generous in his comments that this may well be flawed. I fear that in many respects it is, and Mr Lessard is going to speak to that more precisely. I agree this is perhaps the lawyer in me coming to the surface, not necessarily a pleasant experience all the time, but one takes a look at the Criminal Code and the intrusion of this legislation as it currently stands on what is basically federal jurisdiction. Mr Bartolucci, as I say, has conceded that there may well be issues that have to be ironed out.

Let's talk about a few other things, though, to broaden this a little bit. Once again I want to make it clear that I'm commending Mr Bartolucci for bringing this matter forward, not only on behalf of his own constituents but on behalf of families in similar plights all over this province, all over this country; indeed, as we've become so sadly aware, internationally.

Again, I understand that the thrust of this legislation is to find a way of intervening and apprehending the abused. I can see once again that it isn't intended to address the issue of the abusers.

Let's make this observation: I'll tell you that prior to my election 10 years ago, in my practice of law, my clientele consisted primarily of a number of women who were charged under the Criminal Code with soliciting. Also, in my experience in the courts I was able to observe the court's treatment of the exploiter and the exploited. What's fascinating is that we've got john schools for guys who would want to go out and pick up women or young men, I suppose, or men. Prostitutes aren't given the same options.

Our criminal justice system is one which — and I speak to women, although it's women and men as well — turns a blind eye to the scenarios and the circumstances wherein women, young women and more mature women, are drawn into the sex trade, refuses to look at the plight of those women, the despair that they face. It's not a pretty picture. You've got to understand that, and I think most people do. But somehow the pattern when it comes to the penalties imposed upon johns is one where they're treated far more generously than the sad, desperate women engaged in a very desperate, for most of us perhaps even unthinkable, way of earning income, for any number of reasons, who find themselves inevitably with no option, no john school for women, but with increasing fines and ultimately jail sentences.

I would welcome this going to committee so there could be a broader discussion about this whole phenomenon, the phenomenon of the street sex trade — who's in it, why they're in it and the difficulties and despair that they face. We have to of course incorporate recent news coverage of the good efforts on the part of police to bust up basically sex slave rings where women are brought into this country from out of the country. Their passports are held by pimps — there's no other, polite way to refer to it — and these women are forced to earn their way out of that indenture or out of that slavery before their passports are returned to them and before they're entitled or enabled to return to their own country.

When Mr Bartolucci raises this matter he also forces us to reflect on the pathetic underfunding of family and children's services. He proposes in his bill the intervention by, obviously, family and children's services and I put it to the government members, who I presume are going to be participating in this debate, to talk about — because I'm confident that they're going to support the premise here — the inadequacy of funding of family and children's services, this government's abandonment of those agencies, FACS among them, whose mandate is to protect children, to protect our youngest people, our most vulnerable people.

I suppose it also — not "suppose" — I tell you it does beg the question about the whole issue of policing. We know how the police are required to engage in apprehension of this sort of activity. It's a rather complex, labour-intensive, costly sort of exercise. When they do a sting in a particular neighbourhood or a particular area, you need a number of police officers working over a protracted period of time if they're really going to deal with this issue. Again, the grossly inadequate funding, the under-

funding that this government has imposed upon police forces across this province leaves police officers and police services boards with their hands tied when it comes to doing that very labour-intensive and protracted sort of investigation that's necessary.

I'm going to support this bill. Mr Lessard is going to speak to some problems, very obvious problems, in terms of the legalities. If this gets to committee, and I hope it does, we'd better have some clear responses from the government about some adequate resources for those institutions like FACS that are committed and that are mandated to protect children and that will be called upon in the exercise of the application of this legislation. We'd better have some answers from this government about the gross underfunding of police services across this province, where the cops simply don't have the resources and the personnel to go out there and do the job that they very much want to do.

1020

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): It's my pleasure to participate this morning in some small way in the debate on the member for Sudbury's bill for the protection of children involved in prostitution. There's no question that the concept Mr Bartolucci is putting forward is one that we all feel very strongly about and all can support, and certainly I will be supporting his bill.

However, I would like to point out a couple of practical issues that I think are worthy of discussion here. I am not so sure that more legislation is in fact going to help solve this problem. We already have a situation where to take a young person who is living off the avails of prostitution and put them back in their home — they've already left that environment for some reason.

These folks need some help and they probably need the help long before they get to the point where they leave their home and go on the street. It's a societal issue. We can make all the rules and regulations we want, but if society's standards and society's norms don't change somewhat, we will continue to deal with this issue.

We currently have the Child and Family Services Act that deals with the abuse of children. Under that act the age is under 16, and under that act police have the ability to report to the children's aid societies if a child under 16 is involved in prostitution and needs protection. That act already exists.

Unfortunately, there are a lot of children out there under 16 who are working as prostitutes and being abused by their pimps and by those who would use their services. The bill is there, the act is there, the powers are already there and it's a question of enforcement.

Under the Criminal Code, if somebody is suspected of abusing a child under 14 in a sexual way, there is a restraining order. Interestingly enough, only a restraining order can be sought. We do have several mechanisms available to us now to deal with this issue. To add another piece of legislation on top of what we have I'm not so sure is the answer.

Mr Kormos, the member for Welland-Thorold, made reference to the fact that we need more money spent. The

third party's answer to every problem is to spend more money on it. We tried some of their solutions and they didn't quite work over the period from 1990 to 1995.

We have announced in the last budget \$170 million extra for children's aid societies and we have announced \$150 million for new policing initiatives, so we are putting some more money into the system. But creating some new laws to deal with this I'm not sure is the answer.

Then of course we come up with the old chestnut of the Charter of Rights challenges. Under this particular piece of legislation there would be several, because what Mr Bartolucci speaks to is protecting children from the abuse of prostitution, but from no other abuse. Quite frankly, if we deem it necessary to protect children up to age 18 from the abuses of prostitution, then we should see fit to protect them from all the other abuses that could be out there too. There's an inconsistency there that I think would not survive any kind of a charter challenge.

He also talks about detaining them against their will. Of course, we've been down this road several times, both on the mental health issue and so on and it's another one where the proverbial charter challenge would probably not put us in very good stead.

In summary, as a father and a grandfather, I am absolutely totally supportive of the concept of protecting not only children from prostitution, but those people over 18 who find themselves stuck in that lifestyle and taken advantage of by their pimps and by their customers. I think we should figure out some ways to protect all of those people. But it is a societal issue. It has to do with our standards and our norms. Another piece of legislation added on top of what's already there, I'm not so sure is the right approach.

I commend Mr Bartolucci, the member for Sudbury, for his thoughtful presentation and the fact that he believes something should be done. I certainly support him in that respect and I will be supporting his bill. Maybe a discussion at committee is what we need, but I do think we need to look at something other than a new piece of legislation that probably can't be enforced.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I am pleased to be part of the debate and, first of all, to commend my colleague from Sudbury, Mr Bartolucci, for the bill that he has put together, the effort he has put into this. I know how deeply committed he is to the elimination of this problem and to looking at some ways that we as a government can have the ability to deal with what is a very serious threat, a threat to kids, a threat to our community, a threat to our province.

I appreciate the tone of discussion of the government and the opposition in dealing with this piece of legislation. I think we all understand the problem with the issue of prostitution, the impact it has on people's lives and often the reasons why people are involved in prostitution.

It's easy for us to look at people on the street and pass judgement and see them in a different light because of the trade they're involved in. We also have to understand that often there's a history there. There is often a history of sexual abuse, there is often a history of drugs, there is

often a history of family problems that leads people into the field of prostitution. That's an area we've got to work on. Beyond simply looking at the solution, how do people get in those situations and what we can do to help them before it happens?

When it involves kids, I think it's a much greater problem. I don't think there is anything more vile or anything more disgusting than individuals encouraging young people — kids, 11-, 12-, 13-year-old girls — to work the streets as prostitutes. I think exploitation by these individuals, who in my view are nothing more than scumbags, forcing young people into doing this is disgraceful. These individuals who force kids and live off the avails of kids prostituting themselves should be dealt with, in my view, much more harshly than they are by the courts today. It is disgraceful. They are slime who frankly do not deserve the ability to freely walk the streets and should be put away for a long time when they're caught in this.

We also have to ensure that we give the authorities — the children's aid societies, the police — the powers to take extraordinary measures at times in these extraordinary circumstances. Often the hands of the police are tied when it comes to dealing with young kids, particularly when you get to the grey area of 16- to 18-year-olds, as to how to deal with the problem when they can get the kids off the street one day and they're back out hooking on the same corner the next night. Children's aid societies are somewhat tied in how they can deal with this problem. Again, this is not a problem that can be dealt with in the normal legal circumstances we have today within the laws of this province and this country.

I think this bill will give that extra power that is necessary. Often, in order to protect those young people, we have to take that extra step. We've got to give the police and the children's aid societies the resources to be able to take some measures to ensure that whatever action is necessary to ensure the best interests and the safety of the young person comes first. This bill gives us some of the tools to do that.

As expressed by some concerns of my colleagues across the floor, it is not a perfect bill. I think changes can be made; improvements can be made to the bill. I think committee would be the opportunity to make those refinements. But I think all of us in this Legislature certainly can agree with the concept, with the general overall direction and with the theme of this bill because very clearly it is meant to protect young people. We've seen many pieces of legislation that have been introduced in this House, particularly in private members' hour, with that intent of protecting young people. This fits right into that.

I think this will be widely accepted by the community as a whole. I think it has been well received, as my colleague has said, by police departments across this province, it has been well received by child advocates and it will be well received by organizations and individuals who work with children on the streets and who often are frustrated by their inability to take some action to take

these kids off the streets and put them in a safe environment.

I urge this House to support this bill. I urge the government to allow this bill, with the refinements that are necessary in committee, to go through the House. I think it is clearly a step in the right direction. I also hope that following this bill going through, we will also look, through our efforts or the federal government's, at some very, very serious efforts to go after those individuals, those evil people who believe it is in their best interests to exploit and use young kids for financial purposes, for benefits, and to put the kids on the street for a life of crime, drugs and prostitution. We've got to nail those individuals early. We've got to nail those people to help take care of the problem of young kids.

I support this bill and commend my member. I hope the House as a whole will support the bill that is in front of us today.

1030

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I want to commend the member for Sudbury for taking the initiative that he has. We have seen the Tory Crime Control Commission travel around this province trying to heighten people's fear of crime to justify some of their ideas, but they have never introduced legislation like the protection of children involved in prostitution acts that the member for Sudbury has introduced. So I applaud him for beating the Crime Control Commission to the punch.

We in the NDP share his concerns with respect to the welfare of children. In fact, that's the reason that Frances Lankin travelled around the province about a year and a half ago and after that and prepared this report, Putting Children First, a report that's available to anyone who is interested by contacting the NDP caucus office. In that report, a number of criticisms of the current government's cuts to programs that provide for the improvement of children's welfare are outlined, with some of the suggestions that we would make to improve the welfare of children.

But I want to speak generally about what I support in the bill that Mr Bartolucci has introduced and to bring some criticisms as well. I hope the member takes them as constructive criticisms, because that's how they're meant to be.

First of all, I think we all agree with what's set out in the preamble in that "children engaged in prostitution are victims of sexual abuse and require protection." I don't believe anybody can disagree with that. I also strongly agree that it is the duty of the province to assist families and communities in providing protection to persons who find themselves in that position. I want to comment on that a little bit later, if I have the opportunity.

It also expands the definition of a child who is in need of protection, and that is a child who is "engaging in prostitution or attempting to engage in prostitution." Once again, I think that's something we can all agree to. The member from Chatham says there are many other situations where children may be deemed to be in need of protection as well, and I agree with that, but that's not the thrust of the legislation that's before us.

I don't have any concern about children being arrested with a warrant after a judge has been apprised of all of the facts, but I do have a concern with respect to the apprehension of a child without a warrant. Although the wording seems to provide protection to police officers in that they can do that if a child's life or safety is seriously or imminently endangered, it goes on after that to place some pretty onerous requirements on child protection workers to follow up after the police.

We know that the police have wide powers of arrest without warrants, but what happens after a policeman or a police services person arrests a child whom they find engaged or attempting to engage in prostitution is they're required to notify a child protection worker immediately that a child has been apprehended. They can deliver or convey that child to a protective safe house, and a child can be confined for up to three days in the child safe house. Then it places this onus on the child protection worker to show cause why the confinement was necessary.

The member for Chatham-Kent mentioned his concerns with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and this is something we really would need to look at closely at committee, because what this does is set up the confinement without a warrant of persons who may or may not have been involved in a criminal offence and puts the onus on the child protection worker to justify why that confinement was necessary. That's something that I think we have to have a close look at because, as we all know, section 9 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms indicates that, "Everyone has the right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned."

In section 10, it says that everyone has the right, on arrest or detention, to be informed of the reasons and to retain and instruct counsel. I know that my colleague the member for Welland-Thorold would be very interested to ensure that right to counsel continues to be maintained and respected.

Also in section 10 they have the validity of that detention to be determined. It needs to be determined forthwith, in my submission. It can't wait for up to three days for a child protection worker to make that application before a court.

That is one of my major concerns with respect to the legislation. It doesn't take away from what I'll be supporting here today, however.

There are some other good things in here as well, and that is that there's a break to children who are participating voluntarily in programs that will assist them in getting out of the business of prostitution. It also provides an opportunity for the minister to establish programs that are necessary to assist children in ending their involvement in prostitution and also to designate protective safe houses under the act. Those are all very good intentions and they are ones of course that we concede will require the allocation of resources.

The member for Chatham-Kent has expressed his concerns with respect to that and we have seen this government's approach to increasing the welfare of children over the past few years. We know that one of the most disastrous things has been the cut in social services

benefits by up to 22% for children, families, and young mothers as well, the \$37 for pregnant women, that they were somehow going to be spending this money on beer, for example. That fails to take into consideration the needs of young women in many cases.

We've seen the absolute mess that's been made in the family support plan. Once again it's mostly women who are being deprived of their resources because of the disastrous situation in the family support plan.

Let's face it: Women don't get involved in prostitution because that's their choice of occupation. They get there because often they're in desperate situations. They're not getting the support they need. They're not getting the support from the community, they're not getting the support from the government, and they are forced to take desperate measures. That's how they end up in these situations. That's something we need to address, and I hope the government has some suggestions with respect to that.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I'm pleased to rise to speak to this bill this morning. At the outset, I'd like to say to the member for Sudbury that I will be voting in support of this bill because I do agree strongly with the intent. I think it's the kind of legislation that we should be seeing more of in this House because it goes to the heart of our communities; it goes to the heart of our society. Certainly regardless of how successful we might be in this province in returning economic strength, if we don't address the strength of our family and of our community and our society, we, as legislators, will have failed. So I commend the member for bringing this forward.

I would like to confirm as well that I particularly like the fact that in the preamble, clause (c), the member has articulated that:

"The people of Ontario believe that,

"(c) it is the responsibility of families and communities to provide that protection."

This is a fundamental principle that deserves focus and attention. I think in the past all too often the focus has been on government or government agencies or on the police force. I think this returns, rightfully so, the focus on the family and on communities. I want to commend the member for giving this House that focus, and I would like to see us have more discussion around that principle. Clearly, the province has the duty to assist families in doing that, another reason why I will be supporting this.

1040

In the definitions, I want to draw attention to the fact that this legislation defines "child" as "a person under the age of 18 years." This is on the one hand being represented as perhaps a problematic issue for this legislation because it finds itself in conflict with other pieces of legislation in existence in the province that define the child as 16 years of age or under the age of 16.

I would like to say that if this is in conflict with other pieces of legislation, it isn't a reason to set this aside. I believe it perhaps gives the Legislature the focus to reassess whether we should be looking at the other pieces of legislation, the framework, and redefining in the Child and Family Services Act the age at which children are

children and deserve the protection of families, and not only of families but of agencies within the province. I think that is a good reason for us to perhaps take this bill into committee and have that discussion.

I would like to take this opportunity to suggest, as reference has been made previously by, I believe, Mr Bartolucci as he read into the record comments from police officers and police chiefs in terms of their lacking the authority to deal with these issues, that not only do police not have the necessary authority they should have and which we as a Legislature have a responsibility to give, but I believe that parents have been eroded of that authority as well. Other governments in this province have introduced legislation in this place that has taken authority away from parents that I believe should be restored to parents.

The member opposite will remember a piece of legislation I introduced into this House in 1996 called the Parental Consultation Act. I am sorry that the member at that time chose not to support me in that, because it goes to the heart of this very principle of involving parents in discussions around issues of importance to their children. I will be supporting this legislation and I hope to be working with Mr Bartolucci and other members of this House to bring this matter forward in a way that it can be constructive, that it can support children in our province and strengthen families and strengthen our society.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I am pleased to join the debate today on the bill of my colleague the member for Sudbury, An Act to protect Children involved in Prostitution. Let me state at the outset, I believe that all members of this House are concerned about an issue of this nature and want to advance the province's, our police officers' and our municipalities' ability to deal with this problem, a problem that, as our member has pointed out, is not only prevalent in large cities but is prevalent in small cities. Indeed, it's prevalent right across Ontario.

The bill attempts, in my view, to codify and then expand our police services' ability to deal with difficult circumstances. The member for York-Mackenzie spoke too of subsection (c) under the preamble which talks about families' responsibilities. I share in that comment because all of our families have a responsibility to their children and people ought to be involved in looking after these issues.

I want to take a few minutes to address some of the issues that I know have been addressed particularly by the member for York-Mackenzie; first of all, the definition of "child." The member for York-Mackenzie is quite correct. The various provincial statutes and regulations define children differently. Some define children as those under 16, others under 18. Indeed, between the ministries of Health and Community and Social Services there are often terrible difficulties in terms of applying funding to programs and in terms of applying regulations, particularly with the grey area of 16 to 18.

I think the member for Sudbury has made a very definitive statement about what this Legislature views as

being a child. It would be my hope that if the House sees fit to adopt this legislation, we will look further at that whole definition of what a child is in terms of our ability to deal with a number of different circumstances, particularly in the health care and social services field.

The bill takes great care, in my view, to protect the interests of individuals as defined in sections 9 and 10 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, what I think makes this bill particularly appealing as a piece of legislation is that in a responsible fashion it takes us further in terms of what our police officers can do in a situation where a child is in imminent danger. It very carefully sets out the circumstances under which a police officer can take action.

While I certainly recognize that those issues are pushing the frontier of law, I believe we ought to be pushing that frontier in order to give our police officers and our peace officers the opportunity to deal in circumstances that are at the very best difficult. I applaud the member for Sudbury for that particular effort.

The bill contemplates a couple of other things, starting in section 6, where it deals with safe houses. What the bill contemplates but doesn't give explicit definition to is what our responsibility is once we've apprehended a child, that it's simply not enough to apprehend a child involved in prostitution or, for that matter, in any other crime and then somehow deal with it.

We have an obligation as a society to go beyond that. Where a child is involved in prostitution, we have an obligation to get that child out of prostitution, and yes, families do as well. But our experience and our view is that children who are involved in this type of activity generally don't have those supports.

I applaud the member (a) for responding to an obvious need in terms of expanding the law; (b) for pushing the law to a point to give our peace officers and our police officers new but well-controlled rights with respect to dealing with this; and finally, I applaud the member for Sudbury for recognizing that our obligation to society does not stop when a child is arrested. It doesn't stop until that child is rehabilitated and taken out of a very dangerous industry.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I am quite happy to join with my colleagues this morning to focus on the member for Sudbury's bill dealing with keeping and protecting kids who get involved in this nasty proposition about prostitution. I'd like to congratulate him with laudable intent. I will be supporting the bill.

This bill needs to go to committee and it needs an awful lot of work. If you are going to make this bill workable, I would make the following suggestions to the member, or if it gets to committee, that one of the areas of focus ought to be the following: In Alberta a piece of legislation has been passed that is somewhat similar, but what seems to have happened in that particular bill is that there was a greater consistency as to the definition of children in terms of age.

I think it included up to age 18, so that kids who are in their most vulnerable years of 16 to 18 also continued the protection we have in Ontario under the Child and Family Services Act. I think that's one of the major remedies. We

have to bring into harmonization or concert those particular provisions, because you already have in other pieces of legislation in Ontario that children 16 to 18 get access to driving on our highways. They get other opportunities, to get a health care card, in certain instances. I think that's one of the areas we need to look at.

The second fundamental area that concerns me, and I think the committee could do an awful lot of work in this particular area, is that instead of loading up the courts, which requires more resources, we be a little more creative or innovative, perhaps, in seeking another remedy. I would suggest to the member for Sudbury that one of the places the committee could look at is that we could do some interesting experimentation in seeking civil remedies to this particular situation, particularly where the abuser was involved in a first-time incident; or, if not the civil courts, that at least we try a mediation approach before we ramp it up into the provincial courts completely.

In those instances we may not only save resources but we may be more preventive than the traditionalist legal approach that is in this bill. That does not take away from the principle the member for Sudbury has put forth, which is an effective one, I believe. It's the implementation issues I'm primarily concerned about.

1050

The third thing I would like to see fashioned in terms of penalties where you end up having to go to court, the traditional fine for the desperate souls, if you will, who are pimps or however they end up engaging in this business, and there are a lot of pimps out there — a \$25,000 fine doesn't even start to touch the damage they have done to young people. I think the fine not only needs to be ramped up probably to \$100,000 minimum, but I would also propose and advocate very vigorously with the member for Sudbury that we ought to have some kind of lifelong mandatory commitment, a court order, even if it's in the civil courts, or the criminal courts, and that is that this particular example of a human being, if you could use that term, would have to not only pay money but be involved in community service for her or his term of existence on this planet. They need to remember forever the serious damage they are releasing when you bring children into this kind of situation.

Finally, I think if you kept this bill within provincial purview in terms of seeking civil remedies, which is one of the things the Crime Control Commission — the member for Cambridge isn't here, but the member for Scarborough East and the member for London South have gone and listened in at least 20 community forums dealing with not a fear of crime, as the member from Windsor has suggested, but the actual reality when you get out there.

Those are some of the suggestions that I think might help to improve the bill. Its principle is not only laudable but we need to get on with dealing with it.

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): Let me first pay tribute to my colleague the member for Sudbury. I think today he reminded us all once again why we're here. I think his passionate speech, his concern for his community and the sensitivity he brought to this issue

remind us that we are here and that there is no greater issue than the protection and advancement of our children.

Prostitution is a problem everywhere in Ontario, but it is particularly heinous and difficult when it comes to children, and it is abuse. It is abuse of the worst kind which preys on the weak, which preys on the inexperienced. It is a problem not only of the inner cities but also throughout.

Much has been made today of some of the imperfections with this bill. It is true that there are issues with respect to age that need to be thought through, it is true there are issues with respect to compliance which require some additional discussion, but it is not true that there are jurisdictional conflicts. It is not true that there is duplication, as the member for Chatham-Kent would have us believe. Quite frankly, even if that were the case, if there were duplication, if there were an overstatement of legislation, the message we would be sending out with this legislation is that child prostitution is not acceptable under any circumstance, and that's the value of this bill. But there's also a substance to this bill which is very important.

It is not a bill which is fatally flawed by the imperfections that have been pointed out here, nor is it a bill that recreates legislation that exists everywhere. In fact, it enhances current legislation and gives authorities the tools they need to apprehend children in need to ensure that children do not remain the victims of sexual predators, which so often is the case in our society.

It's a caring and useful bill. I do not believe that the charter challenges that have been advanced here today in fact exist. We heard the member for Chatham-Kent say that this legislation would be open to challenge because it only deals with abuse of prostitution, not other types of abuses. What poppycock. We always have legislation that is specific to particular needs, and we don't advance the idea that that would be against the charter because it doesn't deal with absolutely everything.

Let's be clear. This is a bill that says: "We will not tolerate child prostitution and those who seek to abuse children in that way will be dealt with harshly. They will be fined. They can be imprisoned." But more importantly, there is a constructive element to this bill which says: "We will, as a society, as a government, take care of these children. We will remove them from that situation. We will put them in safe houses. We will return them to their parents. We will do whatever it takes to ensure that these children do not continue to live in those kinds of situations."

I will remind you that some two weeks ago the child advocate told us that problems with children start very early and they are perpetuated. The children who are not given guidance, who are shuffled around from one place to another, end up in our criminal system and stay in our criminal system. This bill is an attempt to reach children at the beginning, so we don't perpetuate the kind of circumstances that see them fall prey to even greater dangers.

Ultimately, for all of us, it's incumbent that we support this legislation. I will tell you why I'm supporting it. As a

legislator, I believe that this is the reason we're here. Our job is to protect and to advance children, and I know that there's a need for this legislation. As a mother, I can imagine no worse deed than subjecting children to this kind of abuse, and I know there's a need for this legislation. Frankly, as a lawyer, I see the flaws, but I also see that it can be dealt with constructively in committee and I know that we can do it. I know there's a need for this legislation.

There is one final thing I'd like to say to the government: Today I hear members of the government saying you will support this legislation in principle. Beware that you don't bury it in committee. Beware that you don't defeat it on third reading, because we will hold you accountable, the people of Ontario will hold you accountable, but more importantly, the children of this province will hold you accountable.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Sudbury, you have two minutes.

Mr Bartolucci: I would like to thank all my colleagues who participated in the discussion. I take all their comments as constructive and very good ideas that should be carried through at committee. I do hope that this gets to committee for full discussion.

Just before my time is up, I'd like to thank a few people. Certainly I would like to thank the members in the House for their very mature and meaningful debate today.

I would also like to thank Chief Alex McCauley and his police services in Sudbury for their very proactive approach to this particular problem, and former Deputy Chief Denis O'Neil from the regional municipality of Sudbury for his direction and advice.

I would like to thank the people of my city and my region, my fellow Sudburians, for their ongoing support and commitment in ensuring that this problem is not a lasting one.

I would also like to thank the father I referred to in my earlier presentation: I would like to thank Alan. Thank you for reminding me about how sensitive we have to be when it comes to children, and how focused we must be and how daring we have to be to ensure that what we do is always in the best interests of children.

Finally, I implore the members of the House, if you believe, as the preamble states, that children are sexually exploited and abused through prostitution, if you believe that we collectively can make a change, if you believe that this type of legislation, although not perfect now needs committee to ensure that we do reach perfection, if you believe, I ask you for your support.

The Acting Speaker: The time for the first ballot item has expired.

1100

CRIME AGAINST SENIORS

Mr Gary Fox (Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings): I move that, in the opinion of this House, because the seniors of this province are one of the most susceptible groups to criminal activities and because of an

increasing number of crimes being perpetrated on this generation, that the Attorney General give instructions to all prosecutors to seek increased sentences for those convicted of all violent crimes, abuse of trust or fraud against seniors. And furthermore that the Attorney General lobby the federal Minister of Justice to create mandatory sentencing guidelines for crimes against our vulnerable. And that all police service boards in the province develop preventive programs and assure that witness protection and victim assistance programs are made available to seniors victimized by said crimes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 95(c)(i) the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Fox: I rise in the House today on this issue that I feel concerns most of our colleagues, crimes against our seniors. I am sure that this issue has affected each one of you either directly or indirectly. After all, we're talking about our mothers and fathers and our grandparents.

Each day we open up the newspaper or turn on our television sets, it seems we are repulsed by yet another violent attack or breach-of-trust scam perpetrated on one of the generations most susceptible to criminal activities in our society. This should be a time in life for this generation to relax and reap the benefits of their hard work and to proudly enjoy the rewards of not only meeting, but in most cases, surpassing their family responsibilities. Instead, many live in fear of their lives, their life's savings and what the next telephone call or knock on the door will have in store for them.

I rise today in the House to tell you that we as a generation are failing them. While our government has developed some worthwhile programs such as Project Phonebusters and SeniorBusters, there is still no national or provincial strategy in place to protect seniors against crime. As well, our sentences on these crimes have been so lenient that it has impeded our law enforcement agencies' abilities to squash out targeted seniors crime, such as phone fraud and other white-collar offences.

We as a province, in the past, have not been tough enough on those predators and in turn have failed to protect one of the most valued assets. Overall, in the last 10 years, crimes against our senior population have risen by a whopping 40%. That in itself is an accurate indicator that not enough is being done. Please remember, as any law enforcement or seniors' organization will tell you, many more of these crimes are never even reported because of embarrassment, humiliation or fear of retribution.

Seniors are targeted for many reasons, which include loneliness, vulnerability and health-related reasons such as Alzheimer's. Seniors are particularly vulnerable to telephone and home renovation fraud because their generation tends to be more trusting and less likely to hang up the phone on someone who appears to be very friendly. The results of these types of brutal and unscrupulous crimes have resulted in ruined family lives, great financial losses and even suicides.

Telephone fraud alone has cost seniors \$200 million over the last five years in Canada. In 1997 telemarketing

fraud cost Ontario seniors more than \$3.5 million. Over 60% of the total number of prize pitch victims are over the age of 60, with average dollar loss for multiple victims being more than \$12,000 per victim. Some of these crimes perpetrated on our seniors are not only shocking, they are atrocious and so are the sentences that have been handed down by our courts.

As an example, there's the case of an Ontario man with a record of violent crimes as long as your arm who perpetrated a phone fraud scam on seniors for two and a half years. According to police, in some cases he would convince women to come to Montreal to pick up the prize and then lure them to his room and assault them. There were over 400 victims involved in this phone fraud plot and half of them were from Ontario.

He pleaded guilty to the crime and was sentenced to one year in jail, which he served at home. Detective Sergeant Barry Elliott, coordinator for Phonebusters and a 22-year member of the Ontario Provincial Police in his eighth year with the anti-rackets branch, called it "nothing but a pretend jail." What do you think that criminal was doing the next day? That's right, exactly the same thing.

Then there is the incident of an 82-year-old Niagara Falls woman who was dragged down a flight of stairs during a purse-snatching incident in Niagara Falls earlier this year. The man involved admitted in court to a string of violent attacks against seniors, all within a few days of one another.

In this particular incident, the man grabbed the woman's purse as she exited a taxi with her 87-year-old companion. However the purse would not come loose because the woman had the straps of the purse wrapped tightly around her shoulder. This didn't deter this predator, however. He held on to the purse and started running, dragging the woman along behind him and pulling her down eight concrete steps into a parking lot. The woman's forehead hit the pavement and she was knocked unconscious, and the man — I use this term loosely — stripped the handbag and made off with the \$200 inside.

This senior received multiple fractures, a concussion and a swollen left eye socket. The woman's shoulder joint was so thoroughly smashed and shattered that surgeons had to install an artificial joint. This woman later told police officers who visited her to take a statement, and I quote: "I don't think I will ever come back from this. He has ruined my life."

The total sentence for this man's string of crimes, which included six victims, was two years — two years for a lifetime of pain and multiple victims.

According to the Better Business Bureau, these fly-by-night scam artists use any means necessary to victimize seniors, including becoming very physically intimidating. They go into their homes and threaten them, and seniors can't get rid of them.

I say enough, enough of the fear, enough of the pain, enough of the humiliation. Let's make the sentences equal to the physical, financial and emotional trauma caused by this crime. It is time for us as a province to get tough on

these types of crimes and the element in our society which is committing them.

Therefore, I am asking my esteemed colleague the Attorney General to instruct his prosecutors to seek increased sentences for those criminals convicted of violent crimes, breach of trust and fraud against our seniors.

I am asking this province to lobby the federal government to create mandatory sentence guidelines when these appalling crimes are committed against our most vulnerable.

I am asking both our government and the federal government to study a proposed amendment to the US law currently before Congress. Under this proposed amendment to their sentencing guidelines, an individual convicted of a fraudulent scheme would face a two-level enhancement in sentencing. This amendment would be based upon a level or point system similar to our demerit licensing system, with the severity, criminal record and nature of the crime, combined with the physical, financial and emotional damage caused to the victim being the dictating factors in the length of the sentence.

As well, I am asking this province to make it mandatory for police services boards to develop preventive programs in their communities to protect our seniors. I am asking the police services boards to ensure that witness protective programs and victim assistance programs are made available to our seniors who fall victim to crime.

I am asking this House to help me to protect our seniors, and I would appreciate further comments from the rest. Thank you very kindly.

1110

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I am pleased to stand this morning as the advocate for seniors' issues in the Liberal caucus and on the eve of Seniors' Month in Ontario, to join my colleague from Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings and support his resolution to have the government of the day take some action on the issues as they have been outlined. Certainly, any effort made to move this issue on at the federal level I would be pleased to join in on and support.

The resolution is focused on three main areas: violent crimes against seniors, abuse of trust of seniors and fraud against seniors. We know that at this time there are no specific criminal laws at the federal level. That's why we need the cooperation of the federal government.

The resolution also calls for police services boards to "develop preventive programs and assure witness protection and victim assistance programs." I join the member in encouraging this government to provide the resources for this type of initiative. We all know that a great deal has gone on in the area of budgets of police services in Ontario, and to do what this resolution says I suspect various police services will need support in funding. I know that when the government supports this resolution, that will be one of the things they consider.

As an example, just in the news of the past day or so, the city of Toronto, because the police services board is strapped for money, is suggesting that the complaints board be disbanded. It's those kinds of things that have

been downloaded on police services that we are going to apparently have to do without.

To support this resolution and to put the effort where our intent is, I encourage the member to go to his government and say, "Once this resolution is passed" — I'm sure it will be — "give us the support that is needed."

I'm pleased to see that a resolution such as this is brought forward so the Legislature can concretely say that we don't want only to send out words to our seniors that we are concerned about them. I received a leaked draft of a Mike Harris communication in January of this year that said he wants to filter special messages for seniors and fool people into believing that nothing bad is going on. As the member has pointed out, some bad things are going on, and we want more than messages; we want some action. That's another reason I can support this.

We have to go further than this. Not only are we concerned about fraud and breach of trust against seniors and street crimes and in-home crimes against seniors from third parties, but the whole question of elder abuse in this province has been undiscovered for too long. There are more and more statistics pointing out that the elderly are suffering abuse from their partners, from their families because of the stress on families due to the pressing issues of the day. In addition to these three very significant problems that the minister — that's a Freudian slip — the member has pointed out, we must also look at abuse by family members as well.

I can say to the member I wholeheartedly support his resolution. From our point of view, we'll do everything we can to assist you in seeing that these issues are carried forward both to your government and to the federal government.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I can readily indicate to the member that I'm going to be supporting the resolution. Of course. Politically, you'd be a damned fool not to.

Laughter.

Mr Kormos: Well, that's the truth, and that's what part of this is all about.

Mr Fox is, quite frankly, a benign and likeable person. That perhaps causes me to be less critical than I would otherwise be, because I believe that Mr Fox approaches this issue with all sincerity and isn't merely exploiting that current fear of crime that prevails, and I acknowledge it prevails, in our community.

I'm pleased that Mr Fox has addressed both the issue of violent crime — because he's quite right: Seniors, because of their age, the declining physical strength that can accompany senior years, are eyed by some of the most despicable in our community as potential victims, as victims more easily overcome.

I similarly concur with Mr Fox when he identifies seniors as a particular targeted group for, as he calls it, white-collar crime; that's the nomenclature that's tossed around. We're talking about the telephone fraud, the scams, these wacko lotteries where you have to dial a 1-900 number and spend 15 minutes on the phone to win a \$1 prize, and spend \$45, \$50, \$60 on the phone call.

I should note that our courts have, for a significant period of time, viewed the fact that a victim is a senior as an aggravating factor. I don't suggest that Mr Fox is denying that.

But we've got some real problems here in talking about this issue. Mr Crozier has already raised the issue of resources to police services boards. Let me also speak to the news item that occurred this morning that revealed the results of a survey of Ontario crown attorneys, prosecutors in our criminal courts. The news item related to this information being entered into the inquest into the tragic death of one Arlene May. The survey revealed that 56% of crown attorneys are rarely able to interview victims of crime. That is a shocking bit of data.

This was a survey of crown attorneys, and I know many of them. Some I've known for a long time; some I only met last year. Let's take a look at what 42% said. They feel pressed to consider expediency in the course of plea bargaining about 75% of the time. They express frustration, 36%, about there not being enough judges. I'm going to qualify the language here, because the language says 36% of crown attorneys express frustration and concern about what's called in the press report "inadequate police work." I'm confident that they weren't speaking to the matter of incompetence, not by any stretch of the imagination. Our police forces are trained and competent and capable and sophisticated in their level of operation, more so than they've ever been in the history of policing in this province and, I'm confident, anywhere else in the world.

But there's a real problem out there, Mr Fox. Crown attorneys would dearly love to prosecute and hammer the daylight out of the perpetrators you're speaking about, the criminals who would prey on the most vulnerable in our community: seniors, in the instance of this resolution. They'd dearly love to. The sad reality is that crown attorneys have told me that they very much are under a quota system, that they have expectations imposed on them by the Ministry of the Attorney General to resolve X per cent of the charges before them. Do you understand what I'm saying, sir? Crown attorneys are pressured to meet that quota of guilty pleas.

When the crown attorneys talk about being pressed to consider expediency in the course of plea bargaining about 75% of the time, what that means is that crown attorneys are acknowledging that they're accepting pleas or making deals vis-à-vis joint submissions to sentence that they know are inadequate, that they know don't reflect the real interests of justice, but because they've got to meet that quota — and there are reasons for that, and they again relate to some of the other considerations in that survey, that there are an inadequate number of judges in courtrooms. I believe that. I believe that very, very firmly, that crown attorneys don't have the time.

1120

We've got a Victims' Bill of Rights, and you know that the Victims' Bill of Rights in this province has been referred to more often for the violation of it than for the abiding by it. Crown attorneys acknowledge that. Look at

the data: 56% are rarely able to interview victims of crime. Their prep time on bail hearings, they indicate as a result of this survey, amounts to some five minutes per file when considering the release of a person arrested back into the community awaiting trial or other disposition.

Those facts, those data, should be of real concern to all of us, because I believe they address very specifically the concerns that you very legitimately raise. We've got some real problems out there.

I have every confidence in our judiciary. I know that from within your caucus, out of this Crime Control Commission, there has been this not-so-indirect attack on the competence of our judges. Let me tell you, the judiciary in this province has never been as skilled, competent and well trained ever before in our history. I believe that sincerely. I'll say the same as I did a few moments ago about our police and our crown attorneys, that these people simply aren't being given the tools, Mr Fox.

I wouldn't hesitate for a minute to suggest that you go out and speak with some of these people, and I suspect you already have. I'm not going to suggest that you've isolated yourself and haven't consulted the real people doing this real work out there in your community, in my community, in communities across this province. But there are some real serious problems out there: the whole phenomenon of plea bargains and the pressure on crown attorneys to meet what they've expressed to me as quotas in terms of ensuring that matters are resolved with a guilty plea rather than by trial.

Understand what a disservice that does to the victim. You've undoubtedly had some of the same phone calls in your constituency office as I've had in mine, and that is that a victim of a serious crime shows up in court and, lo and behold, without them being made aware of it, there's a guilty plea to a reduced offence, with a joint submission to a sentence that they consider grossly inappropriate and that most of the community considers grossly inappropriate. I think that's a real problem.

Some of your colleagues will stand up and say: "There we go again. Throw more money at it." The bottom line is that if you don't adequately finance or fund the judicial system, the criminal justice system, you're going to start to find bigger and bigger holes there and more and more people, inevitably victims, falling through those holes.

Before I close, because my colleague Mr Lessard is going to speak to this as well, let me talk about the fallacy — and again, I don't doubt your sincerity. But the fallacy of this whole approach is that it's after the fact. I know you began to address that when you talked about preventive programs. But the fact remains, at the end of the day, that once some senior's home has been burgled and trashed and ripped off for — and never mind the TV and the VCR; insurance may well cover that. But you know what happens: They lose the mementoes that are irreplaceable and that no dollar cost can be attached to. That senior spends the rest of his or her life, I acknowledge and I understand in a very visceral way — or any victim, as far as that goes, but more acutely and more

tragically, I'm sure, with seniors — living in fear that nobody in our society should have to endure.

I agree with tough sentences. I have no qualms about that. Let's be tough on crime. But let's be even tougher on the causes of crime, because once the dirty deed has been committed you've already got the victim, and no amount of jail time for the perpetrator is going to restore that victim to the position they would have been in before the crime. So I agree with you entirely about preventive programs.

I called the Niagara Regional Police this morning in anticipation of this debate. They'd love to have community policing officers out there dealing very directly with seniors, as well as other members of the community, talking about home security, home safety, some very simple techniques that you can use to enhance the security of your home against a break and enter or a robbery, these damned home invasions that have become quite prevalent. But they don't have the police officers to do it, Mr Fox.

You're touting this \$150-million plan. That's over five years at \$30 million a year, it requires matching funds by the municipality, and it only pays one year of police officers' salaries. The municipalities are strapped. They know they can't even come up with the 50%, and they're concerned about how, if they do, they'll maintain that over the course of the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth years.

Mr Fox, you asked for our help; I'm prepared to give it. I'm asking for yours: Lean on your Solicitor General, your Attorney General and your Premier to direct more funds to policing here in Ontario.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): I'm very pleased to rise in the House and address this resolution introduced by my friend and colleague the representative from Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings.

In my riding, I have a large number of senior citizens. Therefore, the senior citizens' crime problem is of concern to me. To see these unscrupulous characters scoop up the nest-eggs of senior citizens who have spent a lifetime putting them aside, some to live on and some to add possibly a little extra flavour to their life — to see that scooped up by telephone scams and white-collar crime is just abhorrent to me.

I am in a rural area. Rural people by nature are very hardworking and very trustworthy. It's not correct to say that these seniors are gullible, incompetent or senile, because they're not. All of us can be taken in by these schemes. But because they're so honest and trustworthy, they tend to trust others, especially others who will spend the time passing pleasantries back and forth with them. When someone calls and tells us they'll give us some value for money, the hardworking, trustworthy seniors tend to believe them.

When younger people are defrauded, they have time to make back that money. The senior has worked all his or her life to set aside this money, and once it's gone it's not recoverable. We can all be taken in by these schemes, but it's most tragic when it happens to a senior.

While I've been talking of fraud and breach of trust, it's one thing for the rural community. But in the urban population, the invasion of the security of the home, a home that seniors have worked their whole lifetime to put together, a home they consider to be safe — it's violated by somebody who comes in there and steals whatever to support their drug habit or whatever other heinous situations they want to support. They violate the sanctity of the senior's home. It's terror that lasts a lifetime. If the senior happens to be there, it leads to loss of life.

1130

As stated before, the knocking down of a senior citizen, resulting in life-threatening fractures, to steal a purse that may contain \$5 or \$10 must be dealt with most severely. The urban problem of thieves breaking into homes has to be dealt with and cannot be condoned with a slap on the wrist and, "Go ahead, be a good boy and don't do it again." Overcrowded courts are not an excuse. It doesn't take any longer to give a 10-year sentence than a 10-day sentence.

What about the cost? One per cent of society are the people who continually reoffend. Take the cost of the police, the cost of the investigations, the court costs, the cost of life or the cost of keeping somebody in the hospital comatose, and I don't think it takes a mathematician to see which side the scales are going to tip on.

This government has arranged for 1,000 new police officers to patrol our streets. These police officers will become jaded and frustrated if they have to continually put up with the revolving doors in our courts and jails. We must put teeth into our laws, the feds must come to the table and put teeth into their laws, and we have to have sentences that fit the crime.

Rehabilitation? Yes, I believe in rehabilitation. I'm in the business. But try to rehabilitate a dead grandmother or grandfather.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I'm also delighted to add to the two resolutions. I have to say I think today is one of those days that the House will find itself in the position of supporting not one but two resolutions presented in this House.

I have to compliment both members, the member for Sudbury for bringing a resolution on protecting children from crimes such as prostitution, and the member with the longest riding name, that is, Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings, with respect to protecting seniors against a number of crimes.

When we talk about crimes, especially against the most vulnerable group, our seniors, we don't say only crimes perpetrated by criminals. Often our seniors are being abused by crimes of fraud and mental, physical and verbal abuse, and that comes from a number of sources, including the public and sometimes family members, especially today because of the stress brought on by the changes of the government. Yes, seniors do resent that.

If I may remind the members of this House, we not only must protect the seniors from all those outside forces; it is another story when we have to protect seniors from the actions of their own government. I'm saying that to the members of the House not in any particular political way

but just to stress the fact that, yes, we have to do it. We must listen and we must act. It's another story when we have to have seniors come to their place of legislation, Queen's Park, and tell the government that what they are doing against the seniors is wrong.

I want to address myself to last year, having had the seniors in this place saying: "You have been charging us \$100 for a user's fee. On top of that, you are curtailing our period of benefits from 12 months to eight months." Do you know how much stress, how much abuse we, as their own government, have imposed on those seniors, especially those who can't afford that \$100? I know there are a lot of members on the government side who feel very uncomfortable with many of the actions taken by the government. I laud the intent of the resolution, because seniors often are called the most wonderful resource we have, but very often we tend to forget that. It's even worse when we have to defend the seniors from their own government.

I hope we're not only saying it, but we must do those things so indeed our seniors feel protected. I agree with the intent of the resolution, with the content of the resolution, that we need sentences and penalties, but I think we have to go a little further than that. Perhaps we need an awareness program for seniors, programs in various agencies and groups to make sure that seniors feel protected if and when they come out. Whatever the percentage of seniors is who come out and let us hear about some of the abuses they go through, there are a number of other seniors who, because of fear of reprisal or inability in languages or because they live in many different places under different circumstances, we don't hear from. On a daily basis they live through anguish, and that's most unfortunate. I think we should find the ways to seek out those seniors who live under those particular circumstances.

I'm delighted to have had the opportunity to address these resolutions by the members for Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings and for Sudbury. I think both of them deserve the support of this House. I am pleased to have had the opportunity to add my voice to the issues.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I want to bring to this debate some of my experience up until 1990 as an assistant crown attorney in Windsor and Essex county and say to the member for Brant-Haldimand that I disagree with his opinion that it takes the same length of time to impose a 10-year sentence as it does to impose a 10-day sentence. That may be the case at the end of a trial, but the fact is that most of the time, if a person thinks they're going to end up with a 10-day sentence, they would plead guilty, and they're not going to plead guilty if they thought they were going to get a 10-year sentence. The length of time it takes to have trials and the resources required to conduct those trials is something that has to be taken into consideration.

We all support the concept that vulnerable seniors are in need of protection. That's something the member's own Attorney General can direct crown attorneys to take into consideration when they are prosecuting their cases, when

they're agreeing to sentences on guilty pleas. I would ask the member to ask the Attorney General to send out those policy directions to crown attorneys throughout Ontario in the way they treat persons convicted of crimes against seniors.

We can compare this initiative to what we've seen take place with respect to impaired driving. The change in behaviour of the public with respect to impaired driving has been dramatic over the years because of policy directions and initiatives taken by governments. That's also true in how we approach domestic assaults, that no longer are abused spouses able to come into court and ask the crown attorney to please withdraw the case against their spouse. Crown attorneys don't agree to that. They insist on going through trials in every case of domestic assault because of directions that have been provided by the Attorney General.

So those directions can be provided, and I think they should be provided to help provide protection to vulnerable seniors. I would rather see that than mandatory sentencing guidelines being imposed to tie the hands of crown attorneys, to go the route they've gone down in the United States which has really led to increased incarceration of people and has done little to protect seniors and make the streets safer in the United States. All it has led to is an increased population in the jails in America, and I don't think that's the direction we want to go.

1140

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): I enjoyed listening to the remarks of the member from Welland. Being a former crown attorney myself, I can indicate that I agree with many of his comments. In particular, the *Globe and Mail* article is exactly the situation in the crown attorney system that existed when I left there in 1995. I always felt very privileged and it was a great honour to work there. They were a great group of professionals. Many times we would work weekends, evenings. When I did it, I was never alone. There were large groups of us working there. I remember one time when I was working on a fraud, I worked Christmas Eve till 3 am. As I indicated, that was not just me; that's our prosecutors in general. They're doing a great job under a lot of stress.

One of the differences I've found between being in this House and being in court is that because you can't get sued in here, facts often become irrelevant and rhetoric carries the day. I thought I would take a different approach to the motion in front of us and actually try to indicate to the public watching and to the members here what the sentences are that are being handed out in Ontario at present.

There's a book that's in all law libraries and in this library called *Ontario Decisions: Criminal Cases*. By going through it, you can find out what the sentences are that are being meted out in Ontario, and they go back for many years. I decided to go through 1995 to 1998, the years I've been absent from the system and have been in here, and nothing much has changed. I'll just go through some actual cases to indicate what sentences are being meted out.

A case called *R. v. Cipollone*: This is a case where the accused attacked his wife's parents, killing his father-in-law with a hammer, causing several serious wounds to his head, and attacked his mother-in-law as well, severely injuring her. He was convicted of murder. The parole eligibility — you have to serve a certain minimum, anywhere between 10 and 25 years. He received a 12-year minimum parole. That means he could be out on parole in 12 years. That's half the maximum. He was no stranger to violence and in fact had been violent to his wife on past occasions. He got half of the maximum that was available to him, and that's just not an unusual sentence.

Dealing with manslaughter, it was my experience that the upper end of a sentence for killing a senior would be in the area of 10 to 15 years, 15 being a very rare upper-end sentence, and that appears not to have changed.

For example, there's a case called *R. v. Smith*, 1995. This accused met an elderly woman in her seventies and somehow enticed her to his apartment. He lost control and beat her severely about the head. She was gravely injured. He left his apartment and 12 hours later reported that there might be a corpse in his room. She wasn't a corpse yet, but she died a few days later. The court indicated it was egregious and mindless violence visited upon a harmless, physically disadvantaged person 70 years of age. This accused had a criminal record, starting in 1979, so that's 16 years, including narcotics, crimes against property, disobedience of court orders, assault and robbery — clearly not a nice person, basically a career criminal.

What happened? The maximum sentence could be life. The accused got 10 years' imprisonment. The trial judge has the discretion under the Criminal Code to make sure that he spends at least half of that in parole. The trial judge decided not to exercise that power, so this person got 10 years for killing a defenceless, innocent victim. Under our parole system, he could be out in three and a half years, clearly an inappropriate sentence for this type of random violence.

I only have another minute or so. When you go into that kind of violence, where often the sentences are inadequate, they really become inadequate when you talk about property offences. Most of them are not pursued, and when you do get convicted of property offences, involving seniors or anyone else, the sentences are quite glibly.

In the 30 seconds left to me, I could perhaps refer to one other case, *R. v. Bolton*. This person was a career criminal, was convicted of 48 offences, including eight convictions for break and enter, which has a life maximum. He was convicted of numerous other property offences. He had a number of weapons, firearms that were loaded and so on and so forth. It was discovered that he came from England and had five cases of burglary outstanding against him in England. He has a long, long criminal record. He was a career criminal. In fact, this is organized crime. He stole \$200,000. If there ever was an individual who should get life imprisonment for break and enter, this was him. What did he get? Six years. Under our parole system, he could be out in two.

These are very typical of the sentences in our courts. Nothing has changed much, and there is clearly a need for increased sentencing involving seniors and in fact in all areas of crime.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I'm delighted to participate in this debate and to congratulate the member for Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings for this resolution and for his serious initiative.

We cannot disagree. We want to seek maximum sentences for those convicted of violent crimes, abuse of trust or fraud against seniors. Who can disagree?

"That all police services boards in the province develop preventive programs and assure that witness protection and victim assistance programs are made available to seniors victimized by said crimes." Again, we cannot disagree. We will agree with this. There's no doubt about it. It comes home to anyone who's lucky enough to have a senior as a parent. In my own case, my mother was once mugged when she had just come out of the grocery store. The person was pulling on her purse. She wouldn't let go because she had some important papers in the purse — as we know, seniors don't think to let go unless they are forced to do so — and she was thrown on the ground. Luckily, nothing serious happened, but the consequent aftermath of this tragic event affected her for a very, very long time.

Indeed, as was mentioned earlier by some members, home invasions, break and enter — we younger folks, who are also approaching senior years, may be affected totally differently, but to a senior it's an invasion of privacy, an invasion of their lives, and they indeed take it very seriously.

Should there be maximum sentences? Of course there should. But, my friends, I would also recommend that we should include another section of the vulnerable population, and that is those who are disabled. Why not include the disabled, who are just as vulnerable as seniors? Some of them cannot see, some have a physical problem, some are in wheelchairs. They too are just as much subject to this kind of criminal behaviour to take advantage of them as seniors. I recommend that once it gets into the social development committee, and I hope it doesn't die there, we also include certain sections that will be addressed specifically to those who are of the vulnerable population.

Here is a classic case of government cuts. I'm not surprised about what the outcome of this is, and neither is the government member who makes this resolution. He supported government cuts right across the board to police services, including police services boards. Of course now, when he sees the devastation being caused by this kind of action, that the police officers are unable to maintain security on the streets, we're saying, "What we should be doing is providing more services," and that the federal Minister of Justice should also cooperate and include increased sentence calculations involving crimes against seniors.

We should do all that, but you can't have it both ways. Now you come crying, saying: "Give more power to police officers. Let's increase sentences." We all know the

outcome once the cuts start hitting home. On the other hand, it is maintenance of police boards, maintenance of police officers. You don't start cutting them and then ask for programs at the same time. Something has to give. I only suppose that when it gets to the social development committee you will also include a section that will say, "Let's not cut any more police officers and let's give more power to police services boards to include these sections." It is obvious what is taking place here: a classic case of Conservative politics.

To include this section, just increasing sentences cannot be very effective unless you start planning and start creating a whole series of brochures, an advertising campaign, so that those who are even tempted to commit crimes against seniors will know that the law is tougher than it was. It is of no use whatsoever to create these laws and to create tougher sentencing unless the general public, and especially targeting those who might be tempted to commit the act, would know what the consequences of these acts are.

What you almost have to do is create an advertising campaign and create brochures and leaflets. In my own community we have a number of leaflets we have done and we have created and they were fairly successful. I only wish that could continue.

1150

Mr Morley Kells (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): It's a pleasure to rise today and join with my colleagues in support of my friend Gary Fox's resolution. This government is making good on its promise to do something about violent crimes in this province, and the previous speakers have mentioned there is \$150 million in new funding for crime prevention announced in the most recent budget. That drew some derision from the opposition, but at least it's a very positive, major step; 1,000 new police officers on our streets and in our communities, another extremely positive step.

Now here we are presenting a resolution to help defend some of the most vulnerable among us. Our elders are our mentors. Indeed we owe them for our existence, our happiness and our quality of life. We are all taught as children to treat our elders with the utmost dignity and respect, yet too many people have not learned that lesson. Instead, they act to exploit and abuse our senior citizens. Extortion, mental cruelty and physical abuse are the weapons of the criminal mind in this regard.

We note the problem of elder abuse is much larger than is documented. Some studies suggest that the vast majority of the crimes go unreported. In Ontario there are about 1.4 million people over the age of 65, and as the baby boom generation matures, that number will continue to expand. A study by the National Forum on Health found that each year one in 25 seniors is the victim of some form of abuse or neglect. American studies have shown that 10% of elders suffer from some form of abuse. Using these figures in Ontario, it means that there are 140,000 victims every year. Two thirds of the victims are women, often widows.

This is truly a crime that preys on the most helpless in society, and my colleagues and I believe that these

offenders should be punished to the greatest extent of the law. We should follow the lead of the state of California, which just recently amended their criminal code to get tough on people who commit crimes against the elderly.

The new law brings down proportionately tougher punishments on criminals who make seniors their victims. The law directs the state sentencing commission to go after these offenders with harsh punishments to adequately reflect the heinous nature of these crimes. It suggests the following, and I'm paraphrasing here: The guidelines provide for increasingly severe punishment for a defendant equivalent with the degree of physical harm caused to the elderly victim; the guidelines take appropriate account of the vulnerability of the victim; and the guidelines provide enhanced punishment for a defendant convicted of a crime of violence against an elderly victim who has previously been convicted of a crime of violence against an elderly victim. The law goes even further, with jail terms of up to 10 years for some criminals who target people over the age of 55. California sent a clear message that it's cracking down on criminals who target older, more defenceless victims.

I'm proud to say that here in Ontario we are also going to send a message to those ruthless individuals. This resolution is a step in the right direction. We need to let these criminals know that we are going to punish them to the full extent of the law.

I might have time for a very short anecdote. My own dear late father lived alone in the country, and above his door he had a golf club. So I said to him one day, "Why do you have that golf club there, father?" He said, "In case anybody breaks and enters in here, I'll have some way to defend myself." It was a nice story, but it's a sad commentary on society when people like my father, in an area where he never used to lock his doors for years and years, feel obliged to have their doors locked and indeed to have a golf club for defence.

Today this resolution is more than appropriate; it's timely, and I know from the messages in the House today that all the colleagues will join in support of this resolution.

Mr Fox: I would first like to thank those who have stood in the House to support my resolution this morning. They obviously agree it's time that we as a province started to address this serious problem, especially when you consider that Ontario's senior population has increased by 38% over the past eight years. What better time than now, with Seniors' Month coming up in the next few days.

I'm also pleased to see this resolution come forward. There are other supporters, other organizations and individuals directly involved in this issue.

Lillian Morgenthau, president of the 375,000-member Canadian Association of Retired Persons, called this resolution "long overdue." Queen's University law professor Ron Delisle remarked that the resolution was "admirable."

OPP veteran officer Barry Elliott noted, "The resolution is a very positive step in the right direction." He, like

most police enforcement individuals and agencies, is extremely frustrated by the lack of increased sentencing and the lack of sentencing guidelines for these types of crimes against seniors. To quote the detective: "It is the system and the victim which currently end up paying the most. White-collar crime against seniors is almost to the point now where why bother laying the charge? There is no deterrent for criminals." Elliott is an honoured and seasoned member of our police forces who works every day trying to combat fraudulent crimes against seniors.

If this is his opinion, you can only imagine the opinion of those criminals who prey on the vulnerable. It has become a joke to them. It's a way to make an easy buck on the backs of our seniors.

It's time to get tough. It's time for us as a province and as a country to give individuals like Barry Elliott a new weapon to fight these horrendous crimes. This weapon is called detolerance. It is time to protect the people who have protected us for all these years. It's time to stand up and say, "No more."

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN INVOLVED IN PROSTITUTION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS QUI SE LIVRENT À LA PROSTITUTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): The time provided for private members' public business has expired. We will deal first with ballot item number 11 standing in the name of Mr Bartolucci.

Mr Bartolucci has moved second reading of Bill 18. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 95 —

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Mr Speaker, I'd like to ask that this bill go to the standing committee on social development.

The Acting Speaker: Does the majority of the House agree that it should be sent to the social development committee? Agreed.

CRIME AGAINST SENIORS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will now deal with ballot item number 12 standing in the name of Mr Fox.

Mr Fox has moved private member's notice of motion number 9. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

All matters related to private members' public business having been debated, I will now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1159 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I rise today to pay tribute to the work of Amnesty International on the 37th anniversary of their work internationally and on the 25th anniversary of their operation in Canada.

Amnesty International was a simple idea that worked: taking action to protect human rights one person at a time. Their work is funded entirely by contributions from the public, without any assistance from governments.

Amnesty International has become a worldwide movement to defend human rights. There are now almost one million members and supporters in more than 160 countries.

At the core of Amnesty's work is action on behalf of prisoners of conscience, those who have been imprisoned because of their beliefs and who have not used or advocated violence themselves. Over the years, thousands of prisoners of conscience have been freed. Amnesty International members have had an impact by writing letters, either alone or in groups.

Amnesty International members do not work in cases in their own country, nor do they focus on one region or political orientation.

Canada joined Amnesty International in the mid-1960s. There are now over 130 English and French groups across the country, with 70,000 members and supporters. Amnesty International has been active in Canada through a collection of youth groups and through a medical group, the first professional network to focus on human rights violations. Legal, teachers' and artists' networks have since been formed. A women's action network was formed in 1991.

I would like to congratulate Amnesty International for all their work. I salute their legacy and I encourage their continued work.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Publicly funded education in Niagara is taking one real beating from Mike Harris's government here at Queen's Park.

Let me tell you what's happened so far. Already, as of last night, Niagara Falls collegiate gone, shut down, one of the largest and most senior high schools in all of Niagara region. Welland high and vocational school, gone, shut down, written off the educational map. Some 152 teachers in Niagara region getting their pink slips — gone, out on the streets, no longer in the classroom, and that's in addition to some 155 more who are retiring, yet not to be replaced. We're going to lose at least 10% of our component of teachers in Niagara region.

I tell you, public education is suffering, and suffering big time. This government is engaged in a frontal attack on our youth and their futures and the future of this province. This government talked a big game when it said that their new funding model, their Bill 160, wasn't going

to affect what happens in the classroom. Well, poppycock. It's affected it big time.

People in Niagara region and their kids are going to suffer. Adult education has virtually disappeared because of this government's abandonment of those people for whom re-education and upgrading is critical to their success in our new and very bizarre high unemployment economy. This government should be ashamed of itself. I tell you, the people in Niagara region aren't going to tolerate these sort of attacks on the things they've worked so hard to build.

GO TRANSIT

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): The people of Scarborough East are being railroaded. There are posters in the GO stations at Rouge Hill and Guildwood telling commuters that GO is providing "more express service" and that "more seats will be available." They fail to point out that their idea of more express service on the Lakeshore East line is five fewer trains going to the Rouge Hill station.

The issue is not funding. The amount of funding that GO Transit has today is the same as it had six months ago, the same as it had a year ago. These cuts are not being made because of any change in revenue.

If these cuts are made, then quite frankly GO Transit is cutting off their engine to spite their caboose. GO Transit passenger fare revenue will drop because many people in my community will be forced to drive to work instead of taking inconveniently timed trains.

The issue is not funding; it's service. Without any consultation in our communities, without any advance warning to the people who use Rouge Hill and Guildwood stations, GO Transit unilaterally announced these changes. Hundreds of people have taken the time to write letters to the general manager of GO Transit, and all they receive back are form letters telling them it's a done deal.

In one hour yesterday at one station, I collected 250 signatures, people who call on the GO Transit board of directors to cancel the proposed elimination of service, consult with riders before making any changes, and ensure that GO Transit services reflect the needs of all the communities it serves.

Mayor Lastman and the members of the GO board have the opportunity to do the right thing: cancel these cuts and maintain services in the east end of Toronto. I join the hundreds and hundreds of area commuters who say, "Stop railroading us."

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise today to speak in regard to the ongoing efforts of restructuring in Hamilton-Wentworth. We have gone through three or four years now of ongoing debate in regard to the future of our region and the shape it should take.

I was disappointed yesterday to hear the Minister of Municipal Affairs suggest that he has no plans to get

involved in helping bring along a deal. The minister said, "We've been consistent, we want a local decision." That has been inconsistent, frankly, as to what has happened in other jurisdictions. That has been inconsistent with the policy of this government.

The minister also challenged me to bring in a private member's bill that would in effect give the region of Hamilton-Wentworth three months with a mediator to try to come up with a local restructuring plan, and failing that, the province would appoint a commissioner who would make recommendations to this government.

I plan to bring this bill into the Legislature next week. I am asking the minister to support this bill. If the minister is serious about restructuring in Hamilton-Wentworth and if the minister is serious about the fact that a restructuring in our region will save the taxpayers \$37 million a year, the minister will support this bill in the Legislature so we can get on with it.

It is essential to our region, it is essential to the future growth of Hamilton-Wentworth, it is essential to our ability to compete in Ontario and across the world that we have a restructuring plan in place that makes sense. I urge this government and this minister to support the bill this week if they're serious and if they're not intent on playing political games with this.

BOROUGH OF EAST YORK.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Mr Speaker, you know it's not often in the Legislature that a member of the opposition can get up and say something positive about the government, and members opposite will know that whenever there is an opportunity, they can count on me to do just that.

I want at this point in time to compliment the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the staff in his office. Members of the Legislature will know that I and Marilyn Churley from Riverdale have been working for close to a year now on the issue of a third councillor for the community of East York. This is a really important issue of democratic representation. The minister has pledged his commitment to move forward with the piece of legislation I have introduced.

I want to say the level of cooperation has been extraordinary. Legal staff within the ministry have been looking at the bill. There are some concerns they've raised. We're working to have the bill redrafted. It is the way in which, on important issues where there can be compromise and consensus, the Legislative Assembly should work.

I applaud the response of the minister and particularly the minister's staff who have been so willing to be open with myself and Ms Churley and to work with us in achieving this. I am hopeful that by the end of the month of June, actually June 25, we will be debating my bill in this House. I look forward to that and I look forward to all-party support at that time.

BRAMPTON MINOR BASEBALL ASSOCIATION

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): Unlike some of the people playing politics in this Legislature — notwithstanding the previous member; I appreciate her comments — I rise today to commemorate a very happy occasion, the 50th anniversary of the Brampton Minor Baseball Association.

The first official season in 1948 consisted of four teams under the leadership of the president, Hal Brown. The league continued to grow and by 1965 they had rep teams and house league teams in all age groups.

In 1970 the annual peewee rep tournament was born with teams travelling from as far away as Montreal and Windsor to compete. In 1974 a team from Brantford participated with the star pitcher, Wayne Gretzky. Since then the association has gone on to host rep and select tournaments in all age groups, bringing over 200 teams into our city each year.

In 1974 the associations in Brampton and Bramalea joined and registration skyrocketed to 700 boys in 1977. It peaked in 1994 at 4,800. Throughout this time to the present, Brampton's organization was the largest in Ontario and in Canada.

In 1990 we began sending reps to the Ontario elimination tournament. In the first five years, we won two gold, two silver and a bronze medal at the national championships.

An organization like this compliments the parents, coaches, executive members and the city —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): my statement is directed at the government's announcement on community safety zones. You just don't get it, do you? I have been telling you for three years what is needed to protect children. It's vehicle liability.

The police can't follow 16,000 school buses. You had the opportunity with my school bus bill to create 16,000 safety zones to protect every bus in Ontario on every mile of their route and all 810,000 children who ride those buses. But you killed my bill on the order paper. In the words of Colleen Marcuzzi, "You chose to do the political thing, not the right thing." You can raise fines all you want, but without a conviction mechanism there is no fine.

You say you want to target the actions of dangerous drivers. So do I. If a vehicle is correctly identified, the owner should not be allowed to protect the lawbreaker who endangers the lives of children. This month, police in Chatham-Kent issued a warning in the press about blatant examples of illegal passing. Increased fines are not helping. It's an epidemic. Lawbreakers know the Harris government will not take the only actions that will produce conviction: vehicle liability. You are shielding lawbreakers who continue to pass school buses recklessly.

Introduce vehicle liability to protect innocent children. Do it now.

1340

PROPERTY TAXATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): The Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario have joined the chorus of groups and organizations in Ontario criticizing the Harris government for its sheer incompetence. This is what they said in response to Bill 16, the new property tax bill: "This bill is complicated, cumbersome, confusing and, too often, badly drafted. It serves to perpetuate the bad system that the government was so bent on eliminating. The end product is a political and administrative nightmare."

This is what the Minister of Municipal Affairs said in response to questions about this. He said: "The bill is going to protect the taxpayer. It allows for caps. It gives municipalities all the options and all the ability they need to deal with matters of municipal concern. I am fully supportive of the bill and I honestly believe the opposition should also be supporting this bill." Who do you believe here?

I want to thank the minister very much for listening to the grave concerns expressed by this group of people, who deal with this issue on a day-to-day basis. I understand he has finally, after urging from our NDP caucus to hold hearings on this bill, urging by the Citizens for Local Democracy to hold hearings on this bill, urging from AMO and now from this group — I want to thank the minister for finally listening. He's clearly not any longer 100% behind this bill, and we look forward to the hearings.

VISITORS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I'm pleased to rise today in the House to welcome an OAC class visiting the Legislature from my riding of Durham East. Mr Michael Aggett's political science class from Port Perry High School is visiting Queen's Park to learn more about the political process and get a firsthand look at politics. I am sure that Port Perry High School will enjoy question period today. It is clear that Mr Aggett recognizes that the world indeed is a classroom today.

Angela Crawford initiated this forum by writing a letter to my constituency office. Mr Phillips, the Liberal opposition and finance critic and member for Scarborough-Agincourt, and the Honourable Janet Ecker, Minister of Community and Social Services and member for Durham West, as well as John Ibbitson, Queen's Park correspondent for Southam News, and my intern student, Laurie Leduc, all commented to the students, giving them a firsthand report of their duties. This was an excellent cross-section of individuals. I'm certain they benefited the students from my riding. The students were able to learn the duties of the member and the press.

I'd like to thank Mr Phillips and Minister Ecker, as well as Mr Ibbitson and Laurie, for agreeing to participate with my constituents from Durham East.

I'd also like to recognize a class from Markham District High School, Vince Dannetta's OAC class, from Minister Tsubouchi's riding, who are here today to observe question period. Indeed, the students of Ontario are —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Pursuant to standing order 60(a), I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates, on the estimates selected and not selected by the standing committee for consideration.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Mr Bartolucci from the standing committee on estimates presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 59, your committee has selected the estimates 1998-99 of the following ministries and offices for consideration —

Mr Bartolucci: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I heard "dispense." Dispense? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 60(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates of the ministries and offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM AMENDMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LA LOI PORTANT RÉFORME DU DROIT DE L'ENFANCE

Mr Hastings moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act / Projet de loi 27, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): The bill amends the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents. There's a whole section of subsections — I'll forgo that — in terms of the essence of the bill.

MOTIONS

APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to introduce a motion respecting the Information and Privacy Commissioner for the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

"To the Lieutenant Governor in Council:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the appointment of Ann Cavoukian, current interim Information and Privacy Commissioner, to act as interim Information and Privacy Commissioner until November 30, 1998,

"And that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker."

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With respect to correcting the record of Hansard, a statement that was made here yesterday in which the minister of —

The Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, you can't correct someone else's record. You can only correct your own record.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: An assurance was given by the government yesterday you would be interested in that a meeting was taking place between the clerks and treasurers and the Minister of Municipal Affairs. It did not happen.

The Speaker: Member for St Catharines, I know nothing of this and it's not a point of order.

Mr Bradley: Can you not help us out with this?

The Speaker: I can't help you out. I'm sorry.

Mr Gerretsen: My first point of order —

The Speaker: You didn't have a first point of order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Hold it, member for Kingston and The Islands. It's fine to hear a point of order if you just state what your point of order is before getting into it.

Mr Gerretsen: My first point of order is that the record, as shown in Hansard on page 798 in an answer that was given to a question, is totally incorrect.

The Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, it's still not a point of order.

1350

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent for the Minister of Municipal Affairs to

make a statement to this House about the meeting that he said yesterday was going to take place, which apparently did not take place. So my request is for unanimous consent for the minister to make a statement.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to clarify the situation that's been brought up.

The Speaker: I've got to clear up this point of order. The point of order is for unanimous consent. Agreed? No.

Hon Mr Leach: I'll speak to it myself on a point of order.

The Speaker: Minister.

Interjections.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): He said no.

The Speaker: Member for Algoma.

Please, just take your seat for a moment.

It's academic. You asked for unanimous consent. It didn't carry.

Interjections.

Mr Wildman: He said no.

The Speaker: It doesn't matter who said no. There are many who said no. The Minister of Municipal Affairs is asking for a point of order, and I'm going to give him his point of order.

Hon Mr Leach: I want to point out that yesterday I indicated to the House that I believed there was a meeting to take place at 3 o'clock with the clerks and treasurers.

The Speaker: This is not a point of order, either. Unless you're correcting your record, there's not a point of order here. There was not a point of order for the member for Kingston and The Islands and there's not a point of order —

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: Why don't you correct the record? It's your record. He can correct the record.

The Speaker: Anyone may be allowed to correct the record. I didn't hear the minister rise and say he was correcting his record. If it's the same point of order that you were standing on, it's not a point of order. Let's continue.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Surely the minister was confused. We asked for unanimous consent to revert to ministerial statements so he can make a statement.

The Speaker: It hasn't got to ministerial statements yet.

Interjections.

The Speaker: We haven't got there yet, so just hold on and maybe he will have a statement. I don't know. Ministerial statements.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Now you have a point of order, member for Algoma.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We are in ministerial statements. We ask for unanimous consent to have the minister make a statement.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent for the Minister of Municipal Affairs to make a statement. Agreed? I heard a no.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Members, can you come to order, please.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I want to take this opportunity at this time to tell you that this is the last day for the legislative pages. I want to thank them for their hard work, diligence and good service.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): In the Speaker's gallery of the Legislative Assembly, we have a parliamentary delegation led by the Honourable Ludwig Bieringer, president of the Federal Council of Austria, accompanied by His Excellency Walther Lichem, Ambassador of the Republic of Austria. Please join me in welcoming them here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Education. I want you to address today the most significant and dramatic impact of your cuts to education and your funding formula, and that is the pending closure of schools, in fact hundreds of schools, throughout this province.

To be specific, I want to talk about what's happening right now at the Lambton Kent District School Board. Right now they're considering the closure of three schools. They don't want to close them. You're forcing that decision. Here is what the chair of the advisory council for Romney Central school had to say when asked why that school was going to be closed. He said: "It's because we're a small rural school and the bureaucrats and politicians in Toronto don't care what's important to us. The only thing they care about is saving money." There's another school being considered for closure and that's the Tanser school in Chatham. That's a school for children with special needs.

Minister, my question is very simple: Why is it in the interests of students and parents in those communities that their schools be closed by you?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I have some correspondence as well. I have correspondence from the leader of the official opposition, Dalton McGuinty, addressed to the Premier of Ontario. It says: "The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board announced recently that your funding formula is forcing it to close 20 schools." That's what you say in your letter. That's dated May 13, by the way. I have correspondence from the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board itself, dated the day before, May 12, which says, "We will not close any schools in 1998-99."

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: Here's the problem we have with the official opposition, that they're speculating, that they develop facts out of thin air. We are providing adequate moneys through the funding formula to boards for —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr McGuinty: Just so we're clear, I want you now to provide the Ontario public with every assurance that no schools will be closed in Ontario. Provide us with that assurance that no schools will be closed. To be specific, what about the three they're talking about right now in Lambton? Tell us that there will be no need to close any of those schools and that there will be no schools that have to be closed anywhere in the province as a result of your cuts to funding and as a result of your new funding formula. Just provide us with that assurance and then I won't have to ask any more questions.

Hon David Johnson: The member surely knows it's not practical to make such a statement. Schools closed when the Liberals were in power; every year that the Liberals were in power some schools closed in the province of Ontario. When the NDP were in power, schools closed. Schools open and close on the decisions of local school boards. School boards make these decisions based on where students have needs. I will guarantee you that through the funding formula we are providing the money for schools to have adequate housing for all the students of the province.

Mr McGuinty: I'm going to tell the minister that he is not providing adequate funding to schools in this province. Your funding formula is going to lead to the closure of schools and you're going to do everything you can to slide the responsibility for this on to school boards and locally elected representatives. But the people of this province are going to see through that.

I checked into the Common Sense Revolution once again, and do you know what it said with respect to education? That you wouldn't cut classroom funding. Not only have you cut classroom funding, you are now cutting classrooms, and that's going to happen throughout the province.

I'm wondering if you understand what a school means to a local community. It's much more than bricks and mortar. If you want to gain a good understanding of what it means, just think back to what happened when you started to close hospitals in Ontario. That's now going to revisit you in the form of your school closures.

I'm going to ask you once again: Why is it that you have decided that it's in the interests of this province and in the interests of parents and students and locally elected board representatives that you close their schools?

Hon David Johnson: The leader of the official opposition knows full well that school boards make these decisions. They make them based on the needs of their students. They've been making these decisions for years and years. They close schools if they think there aren't enough students in that particular area; they open new schools where students have the need.

It's about time the leader of the official opposition got some of his facts right. He said that Ottawa was going to close 20 schools. Ottawa is not closing any schools. He said that the secondary school curriculum was going to be written by Americans. It's not being written by any Americans. He said that all of the publishers for the \$100 million worth of books that we're going to introduce in the province would come through American publishers — no American publishers.

We have allocated sufficient moneys, more money for the classroom. That's another fact he has wrong. There will be more moneys in the classrooms across the province, sufficient moneys to house our students in more-than-adequate schools.

1400

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask unanimous consent to allow the member for Lambton to ask a supplementary.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent for the member for Lambton to ask a supplementary: Agreed? No.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a question for the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet. I want to return to a growing concern about a contract that has been awarded by the Harris government for the Niagara Falls casino in the so-called Gateway project to turn Niagara Falls into a world-class tourism destination.

I want to make this as simple as possible for the minister. Hopefully he will answer this question today, something he didn't do yesterday. Minister, you received four proposals from competing companies to build and operate the casino-Gateway project. A panel of tourism experts reviewed the proposals. You acknowledged and admitted that yesterday. The panel identified the best proposal and identified important criteria for the project. When you awarded the winning contract, the best proposal did not win; in fact, it came in third in your government's eyes. Even more surprisingly, the third-best proposal won the contract. You somehow elevated it from last to first in your government's eyes.

My question is this: Why was the third-rated proposal for a contract this big, this important to Niagara, successful?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I don't know where the member has been for the last three or four days, but he's wrong on every accusation he has made. First of all, no contract has been awarded. Second, the process that was followed on this procedure by the Ontario Casino Corp was exactly the same process that was followed by the NDP when they awarded their contract for Windsor.

When the contract is awarded and it comes to the politicians, I will be free to share the information with you, the public or whoever else is interested, but right now we're still in the process, where the selection panel has

received requests for proposals, has evaluated them based on four or five criteria, and the criteria are outlined — I went through that on previous days — and then they deal with the highest bid in terms of the selection criteria. The OCC tells me they did choose the highest-quality proposal, and they're negotiating to see if that should be awarded. When that recommendation comes to the government, that's when it comes into the hands of the politicians. So far there has been no contract even awarded.

Mr Duncan: That's very interesting, because you've had the press conferences, the trips to Niagara Falls, the grandstanding. Let me tell you, I was there when Casino Windsor was awarded, and it wasn't done like this; it was transparent, it was clear, and the best proposal won. That's what happened in Windsor, and I was part of that.

I want to come back to the minister.

Interjections.

Mr Duncan: The only person absent in this discussion is the minister. Minister, if you are so confident about your process, will you release the documents of the tourism review group? Will you table them in this House today so we can see how they evaluated those proposals and we can see why that group made the representations it did and why your government is not dealing with the company that was rated the best by the tourism experts?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I'm not sure what the Liberal request is here, that in the middle of negotiations you let politicians get involved? We're following the same process that was set up by the NDP, where it's at arm's length from politicians, and the Liberals are requesting that politicians get involved.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Minister?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The member mentions that when Windsor was opened, he was there when they awarded the contract. That's right. We plan to do the same process. The contract has not been awarded. I don't know what part you don't understand. It hasn't come to the politician level yet. We're following the same process. It will be open and transparent when it's awarded, when it comes up to the government to accept the recommendation of this arm's-length commission. The process is being conducted. The OCC tell me that they've taken the highest-quality proposal and they're negotiating with them to see if they should make a recommendation that it be awarded.

Mr Duncan: What we understand is that this government is covering up why it's not negotiating with the best tourism proposal. That's what we understand.

The mayor of Niagara Falls says an expert panel evaluated the proposals. The proposal that you're negotiating with, which by the way you've announced as being the operator in Niagara Falls to much fanfare —

Interjection.

Mr Duncan: You're negotiating with one. You've ruled out the proposal that was rated the best.

Why have you done that? Why won't you call a public inquiry? If you won't, we suggest you're covering some-

thing up. Come clean, have an inquiry and let's get to the bottom of this: why your government is not dealing with the best proposal and what's in the best interests of the people of Niagara Falls. Come clean today in this House.

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I've repeated before, the process is the same one set up under the NDP. The selection committee looks at the requests for proposal based on the criteria outlined in the request for proposal. It's at arm's-length from the politicians. When they go through that process, they take the highest-quality bid. They negotiate with that. If that doesn't work out, they go to the next-highest-quality bid according to the selection criteria ranking, not the panels they bring in to advise on different components.

I invite the member, if he has any facts of any impropriety, by all means send them across the floor and I'll have a look at them.

The Speaker: New question, third party.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. For three days now, Howard Hampton and I have been raising questions about the Falls Management consortium's successful bid to build and operate the Niagara casino. Many interesting facts have been unearthed which seem to point to some pretty shady business. I don't have to remind you that this deal stinks of payoffs to the Conservative Party. We know that Tory insiders and Tory campaign contributors were heavily involved in this bill.

Minister, there's a cloud of impropriety that hovers over your government. Will you clear the air and make public the details of the selection process?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The member of the third party wants to know the selection process. The Ontario Casino Corp conducted the process in a similar fashion as they did for the NDP government when you set up Windsor. It's a selection process that's at arm's length from the government. The OCC has advised me that they selected the highest-quality bid in the process of this selection and they are negotiating with the highest-quality-ranked proponent. When that recommendation comes forward to the government, and if the government accepts their recommendation, then of course it's transparent. It's out in the open just like it was in Windsor.

Mr Kormos: The connections get deeper and deeper. When it comes to the Niagara casino, there's no question that the Latner family has benefited from access to the Mike Harris government. When it comes to charity casinos, the Latners have benefited once again, not only with Niagara Falls but with charity casinos as well. Gaming Venture Group will be setting up one of the permanent charity gaming clubs. Well, who owns Gaming Venture Group? You got it: Greenwin/Shiplake, which is controlled by Greenwin Property Management, which is controlled by the Latners. And who works for Gaming Venture Group? Bill Noble.

Will you confirm to this House that Bill Noble, who once worked for Jim Flaherty and is the brother of Leslie Noble, architect of the Common Sense Revolution — that it is one and the same?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I'll refer this to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations.

1410

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I guess it's becoming a regular-basic question, but I'll refer back to my answer on May 26 in Hansard:

"This is not the first time this has come up, obviously. We've answered the question several times before. The answer is going to be the same as it was last time. The selection process was carried out by a committee independent of political involvement. It was an arm's-length process. It was through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission. The technical evaluation committee reviewed and scored the bids. The committee consisted of representatives from the Gaming Control Commission, the Attorney General's office, the OPP and outside experts from auditors. A member of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission board reviewed the committee's process and procedures. The outside experts were satisfied the process was fair and objective." It's the same answer.

Mr Kormos: Leslie Noble, one of the chief architects of the Common Sense Revolution, has a brother named Bill. Bill used to work for Jim Flaherty. There's a Bill Noble who works for the Gaming Venture Group, which was awarded a permanent charity casino. Bill Noble works for the Latners. The Latners gave you \$48,000. They've benefited from the Niagara Falls casino. They've benefited from the charity casinos. They've benefited from the changes to regulations for private medical labs. I'm sure they've benefited from lots of other deals as well.

Now there appears to be a connection between the Latners and the Nobles. This looks like influence peddling and it stinks like corporate influence peddling. How many more examples? How much more are we going to have to uncover in the days to come before you'll come clean?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: It's interesting to listen to the logic here. It's like hearing the old tests we used to have when we were back in school, the sort of logical things where they said, "All birds can fly and all bees can fly, therefore all birds are bees." That's quite like what's being asked right now. There are very strict disqualification rules.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Minister.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: It's interesting how a discussion of the birds and the bees always gets them excited.

Clearly, the process was an arm's-length process. I have gone ad infinitum through the various procedures.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I think what we're trying to do is emphasize the fact that we've established an arm's-length process that was transparent and that had very strict disqualification procedures. Once again, if we can stress what the makeup of the committee was, I might add that the chair of the Gaming Control Commission is Clare Lewis, who is the retired judge and who was an appointee

by the NDP government, I might add. It was part of that process.

The Speaker: New question, the member for Dovercourt.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I have a question to the acting Premier. This issue doesn't stop in the casino field. I want to read a quote to you from a press release that came out in November 1997. The press release was announcing the creation of a new company, Residential Equities Real Estate Investment Trust. Half of this company is owned by Greenwin Properties Management. It reads:

"Greenwin is one of Canada's largest multi-unit residential owner-managers, with over 25,000 suites under administration." This new company owns almost 6,000 suites in the GTA alone. Who owns Greenwin? Your friends the Latners.

We all know that getting rid of rent control isn't going to benefit tenants, but instead is going to line the pockets of Greenwin and companies like that. Your decision to gut tenant protection will make your friends quite happy. It seems that in your government, \$48,000 apparently buys a lot of influence: Niagara Falls, Dynacare, and now the gutting of rent controls to benefit companies like Greenwin.

Deputy Premier, when are you going to stop rewarding your \$48,000 campaign donation friends?

Hon Mr Hodgson: There's no limit to the imagination of the opposition. The third party especially should know better than this. Back when they formed the government — it seems like a distant memory now with these hypothetical accusations — from 1990 to 1995, Shiplake and its affiliates constructed over \$150 million in government-sponsored programs throughout Ontario. Greenwin was the largest private sector supplier of housing management services to the Ontario Housing Corp. If you want me to go on to where they built buildings in the Beaches-Woodbine area and others, just keep it up.

If you have any facts on this, I would be pleased to receive them, or you can make them outside if you have allegations that you think could be substantiated. If it's just dealing in rumour and innuendo, we're not open for that, but I am open to anything you have that's factual, and I will look into it.

The Speaker: Supplementary, the member for Fort York.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I want to try to get the minister to focus on the question, if he can, and I will do so with the supplementary.

Minister, your tenant protection package does not benefit the tenants as you purportedly say, but it obviously benefits people like the Latners and Greenwin. In their preliminary prospectus, the Residential Equities Real Estate Investment Trust says that there are opportunities for growth "after pending relaxation of rent control in Ontario."

The relaxation of rent control is an economic benefit to landlords like the Latners. Relaxation of rent control doesn't benefit tenants, we know that, but instead those

who have contributed \$48,000 to Tory party coffers. When are you going to stand up to the people who really need protection as opposed to those who give you the corporate donations?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The member for the third party is half correct. We do want to see more rental apartments built in Ontario. We want to see more private sector development. We want to see arrangements that are good for tenants and young families so they can have affordable housing in all areas of the province, including Metropolitan Toronto.

If you want to go at that at some kind of angle, that there's a conspiracy around, look back at your own record. The Dynacare anchor or its affiliates leased a residential building in the riding of Beaches-Woodbine to the Supportive Housing Coalition of Metropolitan Toronto through the Ontario Ministry of Housing. That was on May 31, 1991. This transaction included a \$2-million non-repayable capital grant. If you want to look for nonsense, look back when you guys were in government.

What we're trying to do benefits all the people of Ontario, the taxpayers as well as young families looking for affordable housing.

Mr Marchese: Throughout the rent control debate, we kept on hearing from this minister and so many others, and M. Leach, mon ami there, the mantra about how landlords will build new housing when rent controls were removed. In fact, we know that's not the case. In spite of what they say, this is confirmed when we read the preliminary prospectus, which reads, "RESREIT will not develop properties or buy new land but RESREIT may enhance existing properties." It couldn't be clearer. One of the biggest landlords in Ontario is going to profit in a big way from the relaxation of rent controls. They're not going to build a single unit of affordable housing in this province.

Minister, why won't you admit once and for all that your relaxation of rent controls was nothing more than an attempt to line the pockets of contributors to the Tory party coffers?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I'm going to refer this to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank my colleague for the opportunity of correcting the nonsense that just came out of that member. They took a program for rental housing and drove it right into the ground. Rental housing right now needs \$10 billion worth of repairs.

What are we doing? We're trying to create a marketplace where we can attract developers, landlords and owners to come back and repair the buildings that you let run right into the ground. You should be totally ashamed of the way that you allowed tenants to be manipulated by the program that you had in there that never worked.

We're bringing in a Tenant Protection Act, which will come into effect on June 17 of this year, that is going to correct all of the faults of the terrible rent control program that your government had in place.

1420

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. I was just thinking, Minister, as the questions are being asked this week about the casino and about things of that nature, there is a proposal that your government is attempting to advance that would call for an increase in the spending limits during election campaigns and the contribution limits to individual candidates and to political parties.

With what is spinning around now, some of the questions that are out there — and I'm not going to comment on those one way or the other — but with that happening and with the great problems they've encountered south of the border with campaign financing, do you not believe now that it would wise not to increase the amount of money that a company or an individual can contribute to a political party or to an individual candidate and that it would be wise not to increase the amount that candidates or parties can spend in an election campaign?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): The member from the opposition knows, he has been around here a long time and knows the history of this place and he also knows that the last time the act was changed was in the 1984-85 area and it was done with all-party consent. Since that time it has never been updated, even though there have been inflation, GST and other things.

Back in the early 1990s, the NDP government appointed a commission, which had two members representing each party on it. The chair was picked by the committee and it turned out to be a former NDP party president. To put it into today's context, there are five voting members of seven who represent the Liberals and the NDP and two from the Conservatives. They've deliberated on this issue for a number of years and they've issued a report that I know each House leader received. Also the election finances commissioner has added his ideas to it and issued a report that I know the House leaders have received, and in the government we will be looking at that along with the opposition parties.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I know also he's well aware that at the federal level there are no limits on contributions and that's one of the things —

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr Bradley: What I'm concerned about, and I think all members of the House should be concerned about and the public of Ontario, is that the influence of money on election campaigns and on political parties should not be accentuated, should not be increased.

My worry is that, regardless of what these people on the commission have had to say, we are elected representatives accountable to the people of this province. I suspect the people of this province begin to get worried when they hear about even the possibility of money

contributed to political parties having any influence on anything, no matter who is in power or what the circumstances.

That's why I'm asking for an undertaking from the minister that we will not see an increase in the amount of money that companies or individuals can contribute to individual campaigns or to political parties, or the amount that can be spent being increased. We know the ridings are bigger so naturally that's going to go up because of the present formula. I'm concerned about this issue. I ask the minister to give an undertaking today that we will not see that kind of increase.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I'm fairly new in this place; it's been four years. The member is one of the longest-serving members. He often speaks about the tradition of the House and the right of members to work out these things.

The House leaders agreed a couple of weeks ago that they would have representatives from each party meet and discuss the recommendations of the commission, which, I repeat, had five out of the seven voting members representing opposition parties — the election commissioner's report — and these members were to discuss this.

We had our first meeting; you know there's another meeting scheduled for next week. You're trying to subvert that process. You're trying to short-circuit it so that I can't talk about what's going on, as the result of a House leaders' agreement to set up a process to discuss this, by trying to say that the Liberals aren't in favour of any changes. In the meantime we're having this process to discuss the recommendations.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I have a question to the Chair of Management Board. I put to the Chair that over the course of this week a number of facts — not speculation but facts — have emerged surrounding the successful proposal by the Falls Management group in Niagara Falls.

There's no question about the fact that Leslie Noble was one of the chief architects of your Common Sense Revolution. There's no question about the fact that she was one of the chief players in a Troy-led consortium that lobbied this government after it was elected to persuade it to change its position on privately run casinos here in the province of Ontario.

There's no question that a Bill Noble previously worked for Jim Flaherty and now works for Gaming Venture Group, which was awarded a permanent charity casino. There's no question about that; that's a fact.

There's no question about the Latners donating \$48,000-plus to the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. There's no question about the fact that they've enjoyed the benefit of some significant largesse when it comes to the appointment of casino licences, be it charity casinos or others.

Doesn't that cause you any concern at all? Surely you must feel some concern about the facts as they develop around this matter.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I just want to remind the member of the third party, if he hasn't heard, that this is an arm's-length process from politicians. It's a similar process to what you had in place for the Windsor selection criteria.

The selection committee chose out of the RFPs, the requests for proposal, the highest-quality bid. They go through the negotiations and if that doesn't work out, they go to the next-highest-quality bid. When they have come to an understanding, they make a recommendation to the government to award a contract. When that contract's awarded, that's when the politicians get involved.

You don't want politicians involved in the process itself, I wouldn't think, unless that's what the member is asking for now.

Mr Kormos: The problem is that a whole lot of very political and partisan people have been very much involved.

I'm not telling you that your staff and your memos haven't told you to tell us what you've just told us. The paper in front of you says, "Mr Hodgson, read out 'This is an arm's-length transaction.'" I've seen those papers before; so have you.

Aren't you concerned, as a member of your cabinet and in the interests of your own personal integrity, that this is exploding around you, that there are clear connections being made, indisputable connections, that speak very much to political patronage, political payoffs, and no, not an arm's-length relationship but a very intimate relationship which could well be corrupt to the core? Why won't you show any concern for that?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The Ontario Casino Corp informs me and advises me that the process was followed properly, a similar process that your government had in place. If you have facts that you would like to share with me that show the connection you're referring to, I'd be more than interested in seeing them, and I know that you would like to make them outside the House as well.

1430

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. I was somewhat surprised yesterday to hear from the member for Scarborough-Agincourt when he rose in the House and made the claim that an individual working at Ipperwash Provincial Park had made a discovery. I'll quote from his story that he gave us yesterday. He says, "...discovered an old Indian burial ground and stated if the band would make a request to the provincial government, he was sure they would be glad to mark off and fence the plot."

Minister, why is it that the member for Scarborough-Agincourt seems to be aware of, as he calls it, "a significant development" when your ministry does not appear to be aware of that situation? Could you tell me and my constituents whether this is a new development?

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In terms of ethics, I take offence that

by way of ricochet you impute motive on a member by way of a question. It's that style. I wish the member would withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member, I appreciate your comments, but the question is not out of order.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I appreciate the question from the member for Lambton, because unfortunately the question asked yesterday by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt must have been extremely poorly researched and may have had the effect of inadvertently misleading the House. It's particularly important —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. You cannot accuse a member of misleading the House, whether it's direct or indirect.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I withdraw it, Mr Speaker, but I would indicate to you that our research would find no basis in some of the substantive parts of the question asked yesterday. That's particularly of grave concern to us because this deals with the matter of Ipperwash, which is of great public sensitivity.

I appreciate the opportunity the member for Lambton has given us to correct the record. In fact, the Ministry of Natural Resources staff have been able to find the letter that the member asked about yesterday, after an extensive search, because the letter quoted yesterday by the member opposite was written in 1937.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Beaubien: Minister, I would like to say that the member for Scarborough-Agincourt might have been reckless with the truth yesterday.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock. That is out of order. I would ask that you withdraw.

Mr Beaubien: If it's out of order, Mr Speaker, I will withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Allow me to deal with these one at a time. Will the House come to order. I'll hear your points of order if you have any, but let me deal with the first one. The member for Lambton, I asked you to withdraw that comment.

Mr Beaubien: I will withdraw, if it's out of order, Mr Speaker.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): The whole thing is out of order.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Apologize.

The Speaker: I don't need the members' help right now. I can hear things a lot clearer if you're not yelling.

Member for Lambton, you can't say it with ifs, ands or buts. It's out of order. Just withdraw.

Mr Beaubien: I'll withdraw.

The Speaker: Thank you. Is there a point of order on this side or that one?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): On a point of order, Speaker: I quoted directly —

Interjection.

The Speaker: I don't need any help with the clock. It's your member who stopped the clock, because it incited this —

Interjection.

The Speaker: I don't want a conversation about it.

Mr Phillips: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The facts I laid before the House yesterday were as a result of letters provided to me by the provincial government under freedom of information. I quoted directly from information provided by the provincial government itself. So I would say to the member for Lambton, be very careful with these unfair and untrue accusations.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Do you have a point of order? Hold it. If you have a point of order, member for Lambton, I'll hear it. No? Okay, then. Any more points of order?

Supplementary. Start the clock, please.

Mr Beaubien: I'll finish the question. Minister, with regard to this situation, has the Ministry of Natural Resources determined whether or not there is a native burial site within the park? If not, why has it taken so long in assessing the situation?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Scarborough-Agincourt, you must withdraw the part where you suggested it was untrue and unfair. That's not parliamentary. I ask you to withdraw that.

Mr Phillips: Mr Speaker, I said that the comments he made were untrue.

The Speaker: Yes, and that is out of order. I ask you to withdraw them directly at this time. Withdraw. Do you withdraw?

Mr Phillips: Yes.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I can help perhaps clarify this for the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, who raised this question yesterday, who indicated that there were some recent developments.

In fact, it turned out to be a letter written in 1937 by an Indian agent to his federal superiors. This came to the attention of the provincial government in 1995, when the Liberal Minister of Native Affairs federally, Mr Irwin, shared it with the media. That's how it came to our attention.

In direct answer to the member for Lambton's question, we are of course very interested in researching the contention that there may in fact be a burial ground at Ipperwash. Unfortunately, we can't do that at this time because of the safety concerns expressed by the first nations in that area. The work obviously cannot proceed at this point in time, and we look forward to doing it when we can.

The Speaker: New question, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. We have in our possession a letter dated 1937 that indicates that at the time your ministry was constructing Ipperwash Provincial Park an engineer working for your department discovered an old Indian burial

ground. That engineer suggested to the band that they request that the province fence off that Indian burial ground. It was an engineer working for your department on a park being built for you.

My question is this: Can you now tell the House if you have asked the ministry staff to search the files from when that construction was going on, have they been able to determine the basis on which that engineer found those burial grounds and what action was taken in 1937 to comply with the request of the first nations to fence off that burial ground?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I'm glad to see that today the member quotes the date of the letter accurately, in 1937. We in fact have done the research, do have the letter, and I have the letter in front of me today. It's a letter from an Indian agent to the federal government, dated 1937. It makes reference to an engineer's report that indicated there may in fact be a burial ground in this area, or at least I assume that's the area the letter is in reference to. So I'm glad the member stood up today and clarified this point for the people of Ontario, that this is a letter dated 1937, not in fact a recent development.

I can tell the member opposite that there obviously has been some conjecture over the years, over now 60 years, on this subject. This government would like to pursue this matter and will as soon as it's safe to do so.

Mr Phillips: I want the assurances today of the minister that he will do this. It was your engineer constructing this park on behalf of the government of Ontario that found the burial ground. It was an Ontario government employee. Surely there are files in the ministry that will go over the basis on which this was constructed and will be able to determine how the engineer found it, where he found it and the basis on which he reached that conclusion. So I say this to you, Minister: Will you undertake today to return this afternoon to the ministry to ask your staff to review the files from 1937, which is when the province of Ontario was bulldozing this park and found the burial ground? Will you return to the ministry, search the files and come back to this House on Monday and give us a full documentation of why your engineer found that burial ground and what action was taken as a result of that in 1937, which was when you bulldozed the park?

Interjection: Hepburn.

Hon Mr Snobelen: As my colleagues would appear eager to edify for the member opposite, that would have been Premier Hepburn in a Liberal government in 1937. I have no idea what kind of bulldozers they were using in 1937 and for what purpose.

But I think the matter is serious. We have said in this House before and say again today that there has been conjecture about a burial ground on this site for many years. We are more than willing to work cooperatively with the first nations in making sure that this is or is not the case and, if it is the case, to protect that site if it in fact exists, and we will do so as soon as it is safe to do so.

1440

The Speaker: New question, the member for Algoma.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): The attitude that has been expressed in this House both by the member for Lambton and the Minister of Natural Resources has trivialized the whole issue which has in fact led to the death of an individual.

The Speaker: Your question?

Mr Wildman: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. The minister will know that this letter, dated 1937, from the former Department of Lands and Forests has been in the possession of his ministry since 1995. The minister will also know that I asked his colleague the minister responsible for native affairs about a year ago what he was doing about the letter this government had received from the archives from the federal minister. At that time, he indicated nothing. The minister will also know that the Ministry of Natural Resources carried out archaeological work in the 1970s to determine whether there was in fact a burial ground there and the findings were uncertain. That doesn't mean there isn't a burial ground. There indeed is evidence, thanks to the possession of this letter, that there is a burial ground. Will the minister now commit that this government will respect the sacred ground of the aboriginal people and will fence it off and protect it no matter what happens?

Hon Mr Snobelen: As a footnote, I'm pleased to receive a question again from the member for Algoma. I'm very glad this matter's come up again today. Obviously this matter has come up and the member for Lambton raised the question today because it's a serious matter. It's a serious matter that affects people in Ontario. I'm glad to have a chance to address it. I'm glad that we've had a chance to at least embellish on the record of yesterday when the letter was introduced as some recent development — in fact, a letter from 1937.

I'll say to the member for Algoma again today —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Kingston and The Islands, come to order.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I'm pleased to inform the member for Algoma, as I did a moment ago in the House, and I think the member for Algoma will know that this is a delicate issue, that staff in the Ministry of Natural Resources have not been able to have access to Ipperwash park because of safety issues and so we have not been able to confirm this. We'll do so at the first opportunity that it can be done safely. We will do that.

Mr Wildman: It is indeed a delicate issue. I don't think the partisanship that has been expressed in this House around this issue and around the tragic events at Ipperwash in any way assist in resolving a very delicate issue. As a matter of fact, it probably exacerbates a very difficult situation. To attack a respected member of the House — like the member for Scarborough-Agincourt — does not in any way help to resolve this issue.

My question is this: The document in question has been in the possession of the provincial government since 1995. I would like the minister to clearly state in this House today what research his ministry and the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat have done, on the basis of the posses-

sion of that document since 1995, to determine whether indeed there is basis for an Indian land claim in Ipperwash Provincial Park. Are you prepared now to state that you will recognize such a claim if there is indeed hard evidence for it?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I'm not surprised, and I'm pleased to hear the member for Algoma say this is a very important issue and a very important matter and that it need not be politicized. I concur with the member for Algoma in his observations.

Let me say again what I've already stated in the House, and that is that we have not been able to have Ministry of Natural Resources staff or the first nations people — who would like to help us with this investigation — access the park because of safety issues from the time that we became aware of this. As soon as we can, we will do so. As I said earlier, if there's a burial ground there, we'll work with the first nations to make sure it's protected.

ICE STORM

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): My question is to the Minister of Energy. The ice storm which crippled much of eastern Ontario last January was probably the most severe crisis ever faced by the electricity system in this province. Thousands of families and businesses in eastern Ontario were without power for days. I can only hope that nature will never again unleash such devastation on the people of Ontario, but, as you know, we must be prepared for anything. I understand that Ontario Hydro last week released its report on the ice storm. Can you tell the House what this government is doing with the report and the recommendations?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I want to thank my colleague the member for Grey-Owen Sound for his question, and perhaps I'll deal in a little more detail with Hydro's recommendations in response to the ice storm in my supplementary.

For those of us, and our eastern Ontario members, who attended during the ice storm, during that time of crisis in eastern Ontario, if you ever needed your faith restored in humankind, that was certainly a wonderful experience to see people working together.

I can tell the House now that most of the farmers in the area have received cheques. The province of Ontario during the ice storm released some \$10 million to begin assistance immediately. When you compare that to other crises in Canada — Manitoba, for example — for some people it was a year and a half before they received any compensation for their losses.

I, as Minister of Energy, along with my colleagues from eastern Ontario, during the storm also made it clear that we would pay for the hookup of hydro on private properties, those lines from the roads to the house, and that was unprecedented in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Wilson: I think the government's response, the municipalities' responses, the crisis team's response,

Emergency Measures Ontario's response — the people should be congratulated.

I'd like to congratulate some people in my own area, people from Wasaga Beach Hydro, like Shawn Maltas, Charlie Adams —

The Speaker: Order. Maybe you can give them in the supplementary.

Mr Murdoch: Minister, I thank you for those words. I know you visited eastern Ontario at least three times during the ice storm. There were crews from my area, from the public utilities in Owen Sound, Hanover and Meaford. The Ontario Hydro crews from Owen Sound were also there. They were there with many thousands of people from utility workers which helped restore the power after the storm. But I've talked to them and they told me about some of the communication problems that occurred during the storm.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Some?

Mr Murdoch: I hear some of them across the way say maybe there was more. We know there were quite a few.

Minister, can you provide the House with more details on how the communication problems we saw during this storm are going to be addressed?

Hon Mr Wilson: If I may finish the first part of my question, I would like to thank some people from my local area who participated. I've not had the opportunity, because I've been thanking, along with members of the government and the Premier and members from eastern Ontario and Ontario Hydro officials, workers from eastern Ontario, and the rest of Canada in fact. I haven't thanked members from our own area. I say that to Mr Murdoch.

I also want to thank workers from New Tecumseth Hydro: Bruce Breedon, Jim Eagan, Mark Stabler and Mike Milner, as well as those I mentioned from Wasaga Beach, Shawn Maltas and Charlie Adams.

Communications was a major problem, a major concern to the people of eastern Ontario when we were on the ground there in the early days of the storm. In particular, Ontario Hydro, in response to recommendations that they've made in their report, will be bringing out a communications plan so that all the people in Ontario know that if we ever were to get into a similar situation — God forbid it ever happens again, but if it did — there will be very good local communications. People did not want to talk to people from Toronto telling them what to do in eastern Ontario. They wanted to talk to their own foremen, their own line people, the people who built those lines originally. That will improve in the future.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. We're now at the heart of the matter on Ipperwash. The reason the first nation entered the park, the minister will know, is because they believed there was a burial ground in the park. They were ignored. The government chose not to listen to them.

For the first time this century, a first nations person was killed. An OPP officer has been convicted of criminal negligence in the matter. It now turns out that there existed communication indicating that a provincial government employee, the engineer who was working on the construction of the park, reported that he had found a burial ground, and he recommended to the first nations that they request the provincial government to fence that off to protect it. First nations people have a long history and a long memory. They knew that.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question?

Mr Phillips: Minister, you now know that the letter exists. You know that a request was made. Will you at least undertake to return to your office and search the files? You do not have to go to Ipperwash. Search your own files from the construction time, 1936-37, and return —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I'll refer this question to the Attorney General.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The provincial Cemeteries Act contains provision for the identification and protection of burial sites, and there is a well-established process for ensuring that burial sites are so protected.

The province has always been willing to work with the first nations towards that end and we still want to do that. As I've indicated to this House, we are more than amenable to ensuring that this particular site be protected and we certainly would work with first nations to do that.

1450

Mr Phillips: I return to the Minister of Natural Resources. Earlier today in, frankly, a very distasteful episode, one of your own members asked you the question that you refused to answer for me yesterday, and today you're refusing to answer it. I will give you another opportunity, Minister.

You know that you now have the letter. You know you've had the letter for years. You know it was your own engineer who discovered it. Will you undertake to the House to return to your ministry this afternoon and request your staff to search the files from that construction time — 1936, 1937 and 1938 — and find out the basis on which the engineer made that conclusion and find out exactly what your ministry did as a result of that request? Will you make that undertaking?

Hon Mr Harnick: I don't know that any conclusion has been reached. Certainly, as was indicated by someone earlier, there have been some attempts periodically to find out whether there is or is not a burial ground in the Ipperwash park. You're not going to determine that out of a file. Work has been done to try and determine one way or another this particular issue, but looking in a file is not going to provide you with that answer.

The issue here is that if there is a burial ground and if we're able to determine that by doing the necessary archaeological work, the province, under the Cemeteries Act, would be prepared to ensure that that site be protect-

ed. That's always been our position and we're prepared to work with first nations to do that.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. I want to return to the issue of the massive, dramatic changes being considered to the way we run elections in Ontario and the answer you gave earlier today. You stated, in defence of the procedure you're following, the honourable tradition of this House, where major changes were not made to the way we run elections without all-party agreement. I would like to hear you today commit to the fact that you will respect that honourable tradition and that there will be no changes to the Election Finances Act or Election Act of this province without the traditional all-party agreement.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I want to respond to the member of the third party, seeing how the Liberals brought this up. This came about because the Election Act hasn't been changed since 1984 or 1985. Since that period, there has been inflation, there's been GST, there have been larger ridings. The member for St Catharines talked about that in his question.

What the House leaders agreed to — and you were part of this — was that we would sit down and have some meetings to discuss the recommendations of the committee, which had seven voting members on it. It deliberated for a number of years and came up with some recommendations after a lot of thought and reflection.

The election commissioner himself has issued a report, which each party has. What we have to do is discuss that. If you're trying to circumvent that by limiting the options before we have discussions, I'm not sure why we have House leaders' meetings or why we agree to have these meetings as all parties to discuss it.

Mr Christopherson: With respect, Minister, you're circumventing the issue. I am not trying to run an end-run around those discussions. Yes, I am on that committee.

However, given the fact that you raised, as part of your defence of this process, that there is an honourable tradition of all-party agreement before any major changes to the way we run elections in Ontario are made, what I am asking you is that regardless of the outcome of the discussions we have, will you commit to that honourable tradition, that major changes to the way we run elections and the way they're financed will not be made without all-party agreement, which, as you have noted and I am underscoring, has been the honourable tradition of this place? Please don't circumvent the issue I'm raising. It's that clear and that specific.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I can assure the member that we will honour the traditions of this House, if the tradition still exists, where members don't try to take cheap partisan shots over issues that all members should consider, and that's why we set up the process.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. I understand that on June 1 the Ontario disability support program will be proclaimed in force. I have had some questions to my constituency office in Stevensville from concerned citizens who have heard that the definition of disability will force them off the program. Minister, what will that definition be and what is meant by competitive employment in the program?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): The new Ontario disability support program, which does come in on June 1, is a substantial improvement to the supports that have been available for people with disabilities in Ontario. It was a commitment we made to the disability community before the election. It is a promise that we made and a promise on June 1 we will be bringing to fruition.

Under the new program people who have currently been on family benefits because of their disability will be transferred into the new program; grandparented is the phrase. We have taken a lot of time to work on the new eligibility criteria in consultation with people with disabilities, to make sure they are addressing the needs that were identified, so that people will be assessed individually in terms of what the restrictions are that they may well have as opposed to being categorized by labels. We've been very pleased with the feedback we've had on that.

We'll be assessing someone's disability in terms of, are they able to function in the community, in their acts of daily living or in the workplace, to see if they need that income support.

MINISTERIAL RESPONSE

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I am asking that you comment please on something that we've witnessed today in this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Can I have some order, ministers, members, government and House whips.

Mr McGuinty: Today the Minister of Natural Resources received a question from a government member that was virtually identical to a question raised by my colleague the member for Scarborough-Agincourt yesterday. The minister chose yesterday not to answer that question. He has, as you know, the privilege of deferring it until a later date and then answering at that point in time.

That same, virtually identical, question was put today by a government member. Later on today, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt raised a further question with this same minister. That minister then again chose to refer that question to the Attorney General.

The possibility exists now that Monday coming, the next legislative day, another government member might

stand in this House, put the identical question again to the Minister of Natural Resources and again we will get an answer from the Minister of Natural Resources back to the government member.

The minister has a responsibility, as you know, Mr Speaker, to answer our questions as they are put to him by members of the opposition. He chose deliberately not to answer that question yesterday. Today he chooses to answer the question when it's put to him by a member of the government.

We had a basic privilege which has been respected, as you know, for hundreds of years in keeping with parliamentary tradition. We put the questions. They answer them. They cannot select whom they are going to answer or when they might want to answer. If they choose to defer it to answer on a following day, that's one thing. That's one aspect of this.

The other aspect was, and I think it was very apparent from the way this was orchestrated, that this question was put to this minister today in order to cast aspersions on the motivations, to impugn the credibility of the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. I think that, in and of itself, is quite inappropriate and I would ask you to rule on this, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Government House leader.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I would differ in my interpretation, of course, of the question that was put forward by the member today from the question yesterday by the fact that there was an identification of a letter, which was put forward by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt yesterday, which everybody, including myself, assumed was of some recent date. The member for Lambton today pointed out that the letter was from 1937, had been in possession of the government for some period of time, and therefore I think there was a significant difference in the question.

1500

The other part too is that notwithstanding that the opposition have the bulk of the time in question period, our backbenchers have the right to ask their own questions in their own manner and for whatever purposes they would choose. I don't see where the opposition have the only opportunity to embarrass members of the government when they are acting inconsistently or cannot answer questions with regard to what is happening. In fact, this Legislature is built for all members of the Legislature to use for their purposes in getting answers to questions. Particularly with regard to this member, who represents the area and wants the question clarified in this Legislature, I think it is a breach of his privilege that he would be denied the opportunity to ask any question that he would choose to put in front of a minister.

Second, with regard to what a minister may or may not answer or may refer to another minister, that is of course, as you know, a privilege that the minister has as to whether he answers a question at all. He can in fact refuse to answer a question. I only know from the Minister of Natural Resources that the way I looked at his answer he

was trying to find the most reasonable and responsive answer to the question posed and chose at one point in the proceedings to refer that to the minister who is responsible for native affairs, the Attorney General, and therefore he referred it to him.

Members opposite may not agree that he was the best minister to answer it at that time, but I say, according to our standing orders, that is the option of the minister to whom the question is posed. Therefore, Mr Speaker, I would say, number one, this is not a breach of the orders. It's held right within the standing orders. Number two, if it's a breach of privilege of anyone, if you ruled against the member for Lambton, it would be a breach of his privilege.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I listened carefully to the government House leader and I would certainly agree that members of the government party who are not members of the treasury bench have the right to pose questions. I would ask the Speaker, however, to review the record very carefully to determine whether the intent of that member, the member for Lambton, was to solicit information from the minister or to impugn the motives of the member for Scarborough-Agincourt the previous day. That is really of concern to me.

The second point I'd like to make is that certainly the minister, in answering his question, can indeed determine whether to answer or to refuse to answer or to postpone to another time, but surely in this particular situation it would have behooved everyone in the House to try and cool the situation rather than to exacerbate what is a very serious situation outside of this House that we all in this assembly are aware of.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): The government House leader put his finger right on it. He said he assumed that the letter had been written recently. I would like you to examine the Hansard, pages 797 and 798 of yesterday, in dealing with the question and answer that was given to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. There's absolutely nothing in there that indicates when the letter was written.

He talked about, "I imagine you are aware that there is a letter that indicates that when your engineers," etc. He did not indicate a date. It's my understanding that the letter came into his possession as the result of a freedom of information request so that he only became aware of the letter recently and he brought it to the attention.

For the government House leader to say that he assumed that it was a recent letter is, in my opinion — maybe it's an assumption, but out of that assumption comes the motivation and the attack on the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. There's nothing in the question that could, in my opinion, reasonably lead to the assumption he made on this issue.

The Speaker: Thank you very much. Let me just be clear right off the top with respect to this issue. There is nothing that the Speaker can do to direct ministers to answer or not answer questions, who they're referred to and who they're not referred to.

I found the particular episode today completely distasteful. I think it's the situation that we found this House

in some disorder. I don't think it brought favour on any of us, to be quite frank.

To be fair to the government House leader, by rule, you're right. The fact is that those are the rules and we must live by those rules. But it's also my rule to maintain good order in this place, and it's very difficult to maintain good order when a question goes from a member to a minister disparaging a member twice who had asked a similar question the day before. It is a very difficult thing to ask a Speaker to maintain order when that happens.

I will side with the government House leader. You're clearly right. But I think we all have a responsibility in here to act like honourable members. I don't think today was our finest hour.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Before members leave the chamber, I want to put forward the business of the Legislature for next week, June 1, under standing order 55.

On Monday, June 1, in the afternoon we will be debating a Liberal opposition day. In the evening we will deal with Bill 16, the Small Business and Charities Protection Act.

On Tuesday, June 2, in the afternoon we will be dealing with Bill 15, and in the evening, Bill 12.

On Wednesday, in the afternoon we will be dealing with Bill 6, the Partnerships Statute Law Amendment Act, and also Bill 26, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act dealing with community safety zones, and in the evening, Bill 25, which is the Red Tape Reduction Act.

We will deal with ballot items 13 and 14 in private members' hour on Thursday morning, June 4, and in the afternoon we will be dealing with Bill 25, the Red Tape Reduction Act.

PETITIONS

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have a petition that I present to you. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Premier of Ontario has committed the government of Ontario to enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act during the current term of office; and

"Whereas the expiry of the government of Ontario's current term of office is approaching; and

"Whereas the Premier of Ontario has further committed the government of Ontario to working with members of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, among others, to develop such legislation; and

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has unanimously passed a resolution urging the government of

Ontario to keep its promise to enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act during the current term of office and that the government of Ontario work with members of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, among others, to develop such legislation; and

"Whereas the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, of which Bloorview Macmillan Centre is a supporting member, has provided to the government of Ontario the document A Blueprint for a Strong and Effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which contains many examples of barriers experienced by people, including children and young adults with disabilities; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario committed in its 1998 budget address to supporting people with disabilities through a variety of measures, including the creation of an Ontarians with Disabilities Act;

"Therefore we, the undersigned of Bloorview Macmillan Centre, a family-centred rehabilitation facility serving Ontario's children and youth with disabilities and special needs and their families, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately act on its commitment to enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act during the current term of office, and in doing so include effective means to eliminate barriers experienced by children and young adults with disabilities and special needs and their families, and also to involve the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, among others, including children and young adults with disabilities and special needs and their families, in developing such legislation."

I affix my signature to this petition.

1510

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Premier of Ontario has committed the government of Ontario to enacting an Ontarians with Disabilities Act during the current term of office; and

"Whereas the expiry of the government of Ontario's current term of office is approaching, thank goodness" — whoops. No, it doesn't say that. Sorry, I misread that.

"Whereas the Premier of Ontario has further committed the government of Ontario to working with members of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, among others, to develop such legislation; and

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has unanimously passed a resolution urging the government of Ontario to keep its promise to enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act during the current term of office and that the government of Ontario work with members of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, among others, to develop such legislation; and

"Whereas the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, of which Bloorview Macmillan Centre is a supporting member, has provided to the government of Ontario the document A Blueprint for a Strong and Effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which contains many examples of barriers experienced by people, including children and young adults with disabilities; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario committed in its 1998 budget address to supporting people with disabilities

through a variety of measures, including the creation of an Ontarians with Disabilities Act;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, of Bloorview Macmillan Centre, a family-centred rehabilitation facility serving Ontario's children and youth with disabilities and special needs and their families, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately act on its commitment to enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act during the current term of office, and in doing so include effective means to eliminate barriers experienced by children and young adults with disabilities and special needs and their families, and also to involve the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, among others, including children and young adults with disabilities and special needs and their families, in developing such legislation."

I'm in complete agreement and have affixed my signature.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): I'm pleased to present a petition today signed by a couple of thousand people in my riding high atop spectacular Hamilton Mountain. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Hamilton-Wentworth police force estimate that at least 10% of traffic accidents are caused by the running of red lights; and

"Whereas these accidents account for some of the most serious bodily injuries; and

"Whereas other jurisdictions have decreased the number of these types of accidents by the placing of cameras at intersections; and

"Whereas Hamilton city council has debated and passed a motion requesting that the province enable them to place cameras at intersections; and

"Whereas Hamilton city council has passed a motion asking the province that the city of Hamilton be chosen as the site of the camera pilot project;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the government to allow for the use of cameras at intersections in order to better enforce the traffic laws governing the use of our roads and ensuring the safety of the public."

I affix my signature to that.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas the Premier of Ontario has committed the government of Ontario to enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act during the current term of office; and

"Whereas the expiry of the government of Ontario's current term of office is approaching; and

"Whereas the Premier of Ontario has further committed the government of Ontario to working with members of

the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, among others, to develop such legislation; and

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has unanimously passed a resolution urging the government of Ontario to keep its promise to enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act during the current term of office and that the government of Ontario work with members of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, among others, to develop such legislation; and

"Whereas the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, of which Bloorview MacMillan Centre is a supporting member, has provided to the government of Ontario the document A Blueprint for a Strong and Effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which contains many examples of barriers experienced by people, including children and young adults with disabilities; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario committed in its 1998 budget address to supporting people with disabilities through a variety of measures, including the creation of an Ontarians with Disabilities Act;

"Therefore we, the undersigned of Bloorview MacMillan Centre, a family-centred rehabilitation facility serving Ontario's children and youth with disabilities and special needs and their families, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately act on its commitment to enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act during the current term of office, and in doing so include effective means to eliminate barriers experienced by children and young adults with disabilities and special needs and their families, and also to involve the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, among others, including children and young adults with disabilities and special needs and their families, in developing such legislation."

I've affixed my signature as well.

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion three-year agreement with the Ontario Medical Association; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to improve patient access to chiropractic services on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes, because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made

by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr David Caplan (Orléans): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas since Mike Harris took office consumers across Ontario have been gouged by large oil companies who have implemented unfair and dramatic increases in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas this increase in the price of gasoline has outpaced the rate of inflation by a rate that is totally unacceptable to all consumers in this province because it is unfair and directly affects their ability to purchase other consumer goods; and

"Whereas Premier Mike Harris and ministers within the cabinet of this government while in opposition expressed grave concern for gas price gouging and asked the government of the day to take action; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government could take action under Ontario law and pass predatory gas legislation which would protect consumers, but instead seems intent on looking after the interests of big oil companies;

"We, the undersigned, petition Premier Harris and the government of Ontario to eliminate gas price fixing and prevent the oil companies from gouging the public on an essential and vital product."

I wholeheartedly agree and affix my signature hereto.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition signed by members of the CAW, CUPE and CEP. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas approximately 300 workers are killed on the job each year and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario continues to allow a massive erosion of WCB prevention funding; and

"Whereas Ontario workers are fearful that the government of Ontario, through its recent initiatives, is threatening to dismantle workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have consistently provided a meaningful role for labour within the health and safety prevention system; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have proven to be the most cost-effective prevention organizations funded by the WCB;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cease the assault on

the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre remain labour-driven organizations with full and equitable WCB funding and that the WCB provide adequate prevention funding to eliminate workplace illnesses, injuries and death."

On behalf of my NDP colleagues, I proudly add my name to these petitioners'.

ABORTION

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I have a petition that I'm presenting on behalf of the member for Waterloo North, who of course is a cabinet minister and can't present petitions in this House. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

It's signed by quite a number of people from the Kitchener-Waterloo area.

1520

NURSES' BILL OF RIGHTS

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas nursing is key to quality health care; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to provide high-quality health care; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to be heard and consulted on health care issues; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to be recognized and treated as equals in the health care system; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to have meaningful participation in all aspects of health care reform; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to be advocates for their communities and the people they care for without fear of reprisal; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to work in settings that are free from harassment and discrimination and that

nurture learning, diversity, personal growth, job satisfaction and mutual support; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to work in conditions that promote and foster professionalism and teamwork; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to deliver care in an integrated, publicly funded, not-for-profit health care system that is grounded in the principles of the Canada Health Act;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour, promote and respect the nurses' bill of rights as outlined above and to ensure that these rights are enshrined in all aspects of health care."

I agree with it and I've signed it.

UNITED EMPIRE LOYALISTS

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough): I have a petition to the Parliament, recognizing the important role the United Empire Loyalists have played and continue to play in our province's history and development. This petition is signed by a number of people from across the province. I'll only read the main motion:

"That the government of Ontario ensure that a suitable learning unit on the United Empire Loyalists be included in the history curriculum for Ontario schools."

I affix my signature as well.

PIT BULL REGULATION

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have a petition signed by the people in Tillsonburg and area who are concerned about attacks by pit bulls.

"Whereas the Municipal Act, RSO 1990, does not allow municipalities to regulate or prohibit a class or breed of dog, nor is there a specific provision in the act pertaining to dogs that allows for the prohibition or regulation of dogs by breed or class; and

"Whereas the pit bull is a breed of dog that has shown a propensity to be vicious and attack, endangering both human life and that of other animals in the town of Tillsonburg; and

"Whereas the town of Tillsonburg now deems it expedient to have specific legislation permitting the town to regulate and prohibit a pit bull dog in the town of Tillsonburg;

"We, the undersigned, support and seek the permissive authority for the town of Tillsonburg to take proactive measures to regulate and restrict the pit bull dog that will allow the town to address the significant danger posed to the citizens of Tillsonburg prior to a vicious attack or bite by a pit bull dog."

I sign this petition.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas the health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

I affix my signature to this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PREVENTION OF UNIONIZATION ACT (ONTARIO WORKS), 1998

LOI DE 1998 VISANT À EMPÊCHER LA SYNDICALISATION (PROGRAMME ONTARIO AU TRAVAIL)

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 22, An Act to Prevent Unionization with respect to Community Participation under the Ontario Works Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 22, Loi visant à empêcher la syndicalisation en ce qui concerne la participation communautaire visée par la Loi de 1997 sur le programme Ontario au travail.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I want to take this opportunity, the 20 minutes I have, to speak out in opposition to this particular bill, Bill 22. Normally, as members we stand in this House and we say how pleased we are to have an opportunity to comment on the bills brought forward by the government, but I've got to tell you, I take no pleasure whatsoever in even having the opportunity to debate this particular bill.

In my view, Bill 22 has to be one of the most reprehensible bills this government has brought forward. It

truly shows, in my opinion, the extent to which this government is prepared to go to confront — a government that believes in confrontation — and the contempt, in some cases, for the people in our society who are least able to defend themselves, the most vulnerable in our society. I've seen a number of bills, but this bill especially tells me they're prepared to go to any lengths whatsoever, including using their parliamentary authority to withhold rights of individuals within this province.

This bill is called An Act to Prevent Unionization with respect to Community Participation under the Ontario Works Act. In short, what this bill says is that if you are unfortunately out of work, your UI benefits have run out and you're forced into the position of having to collect welfare in Ontario and are participating, because you're being forced to, in a workfare program in Ontario, the government of Ontario will take away your right to join a democratic trade union organization. That's what this bill does.

I note the parliamentary assistant shaking his head in the negative, but let's read what the bill says. If you look at subsection 73.1(2) it reads as follows:

"Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), under the Labour Relations Act, 1995 no person shall do any of the following with respect to his or her participation in a community participation activity" — in other words, workfare. Nobody shall "join a trade union," no one will "have the terms and conditions under which he or she participates determined through collective bargaining" or "strike."

It's interesting to note that the parliamentary assistant across the way seems to think this doesn't limit people's rights. I fail to see how you figure that this doesn't limit the right of an individual to strike, to join a trade union and try to negotiate whatever rights they think they may be entitled to by way of a trade union.

I want to come back to the point that this government, since its election in 1995, has demonstrated that it's prepared to go to any lengths given to them by its parliamentary majority in this House to attack the most vulnerable people in our society. You can best judge a society and its compassion by how it treats its people who are least advantaged. If our province treats those people at the lowest end of the economic scale in a way that gives them some dignity and some respect, I think that reflects well on our ability as a society to demonstrate some generosity. On the other hand, if a society — such as we see now under this Tory government — consciously decides it's going to pick on those people at the low end of our socioeconomic scale, it says a lot about where that society is going.

I really, really feel badly for the people in this province due to many of the actions this government is taking. Take a look at what this government has done. I remember being in this Legislature back in either the fall of 1995 or the spring of 1996; the House was either coming in or coming back. The government knew there was going to be a huge protest in front of the Legislature here organized by the trade union movement in response to actions this

government was taking in a whole bunch of issues. It had to do with the repeal of the anti-scab legislation, the attack through Bill 26 and a whole bunch of other legislation this government had passed. The trade union movement and others who were concerned decided they were going to come here and protest.

1530

This government demonstrated through its actions that they were prepared to go to any length to suppress or to quell the opposition of the people in this province who decided to come here and protest. I remember seeing with my own eyes — and I was quite upset when I saw it — the strength and the number of police who were on the front lawn of this Legislature, called in by this government. They felt, for some reason, because of the people who came here to protest, that they were under a threat of safety of some kind.

A Conservative member across the way nods, "Yes, we felt threatened." I don't understand how you feel threatened by the public. People have the right in this province, under whatever government, NDP, Conservative or Liberal, to come to this Legislature to demonstrate peaceably in front of the front steps of this Legislature.

I was a member of a government, Madam Speaker, as you were, when people were upset with some of the policies of our government, but at no time did the former NDP government ever call out the police in the numbers that we've seen on the front lawn of this Legislature in the spring of 1996 and on other occasions in this House. We never saw the police being called to the extent we're seeing now when the Liberal government was in power, because there was an understanding by those two former governments, and I would argue by the older Tories under the Davis-Robarts time, that the public has the right to come here to demonstrate.

One of the basic tenets of democracy is the ability of people to gather in front of their Legislature to protest the actions of their government. But the response by this government was, "Bring out the police, arm them to the hilt, show force and get people all wound up because of seeing this force, and maybe we'll be able to develop some sort of confrontation."

If that wasn't enough, when they saw that people were being pretty peaceable — yes, they were slowing down members from entering the Legislature, including opposition members, but they were letting people into the Legislature — they went to the extent of calling in the riot squad; a scene you would see out of the 1930s in Germany or some other countries that have less democratic principles; a scene where the government caucus members were being escorted into the buildings of the Legislature across the street, into the Whitney Block, by force, by way of a riot squad.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: With all respect, I believe you'll rule in my favour on this. We are here to debate a specific bill. I've been listening to the honourable member for some time and there has been no reference to the bill. I would ask you to keep him on track.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): There was a reference to the bill. I want to remind the member, however, that he is veering off and to come back to the bill under discussion today.

Mr Bisson: I am coming back directly to the bill.

The point I make — and I'm using this as an example — is that the government went to the extent of calling in the riot squad to escort their members and create a confrontation in order to pick a fight with those people who were out here protesting in a civil and law-abiding way. They were prepared to go to any lengths to pick that fight.

We see that the government, with the bill they bring before us today, Bill 22, is prepared to pick yet another fight. If you read the comments of the Minister of Community and Social Services in I believe the Globe and Mail, an article dated May 15, "Unions to be Barred from Workfare," the minister's comments are quite interesting. I think it bears out my earlier comments. It says: "As Community and Social Services Minister Janet Ecker introduced the amendment, she told the Legislature that her government will 'not stand by and allow some labour leaders to stop these valuable and productive reforms to our welfare system.'"

Those comments, in my opinion, are quite inflammatory. She is suggesting that the labour leaders in this province, who are duly elected by their membership, a membership that is a democratic organization — she is trying to pick a fight with them and is trying to paint a picture that basically says, "It is those bad old labour leaders who are trying to stop all the good work our government is doing."

What this government does time and time again is to try to depict people in our society, be it the labour movement or the most vulnerable people in our society who happen to be on welfare, as the cause of the problems in Ontario. I say this is not the kind of tone that I think this government should be giving. It seems to me what this government should be doing is what former governments did. They were elected by the people, they have a right to govern, they have a right to bring forward legislation, and that's not what the argument is. But they also have a responsibility in being elected to be respectful to the citizenry that they are governing on behalf of.

When you see a government making comments such as this in the paper and you see by their actions they are prepared to go to any extent to be able to pick a fight with labour leaders or pick a fight with people on welfare or pick a fight with whomever to make their point, as they tried to do with the teachers, I think it really brings into question to what extent this government has gone to be confrontational with the very people they are here supposedly to serve.

I hope that this government, if they truly believe that these policies are the right policies, would come out and try to take the high ground and say, "We're doing this for the following reasons." But to come in and introduce workfare in the province of Ontario and then come back by way of this bill, Bill 22, and feel that they have to

introduce legislation to ban the right for people to organize and to strike if they go into workfare, to me seems like somebody trying to kill a mosquito with a shovel. They're really using an instrument that's far larger than it needs to be.

First of all, let's take a look at this. People have a democratic right in our society to sign a union card. People do not join unions on a whim or without thought. I believe the people of this province who have joined trade unions in the past have given very serious thought to signing a card. They have looked at the issues and they've decided according to their own free will what they want to do.

Once the unions are formed wherever the workplace might be, people elect executives. They develop bylaws within their organization. They set negotiating agendas based on the democratic will of those organizations. From there, they go and bargain with their employers the benefits and the work conditions and the pay rates of what the workers would like to see, given the needs of the workers. Then there's a saw-off. You know, the employer says, "We can't afford this or we can't go in that direction." The union says they want this and the employer says they want that, and eventually they come to some agreement about what would be a fair package when it comes to conditions of work and the benefits that are paid by way of both benefits and salary. For this government to give this notion that workers should not have that right, I think really takes a stretch.

I think back to another bill that this government introduced, Bill 131, that was introduced by one of the private members, I forget exactly which member of the Conservative caucus. If you remember, Madam Speaker, this government came into this House by way of a private member and introduced Bill 131 that tried to attack the Rand formula. What's the Rand formula? The Rand formula is the compromise that was set some years ago in Ontario that says if there is a union drive within a property that is owned by an employer — let's say you're a local manufacturing plant or whatever — and there's a union formed there, the dues will come off by way of the paycheque. That ensures that everybody who is a member of that union pays their dues to the union so the union can do its work. This is a basic tenet —

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: It's interesting to note the comments of the government. The government says, "They shouldn't be doing that." Hang on a second. Let's not even go where the government's going because, quite frankly, it's a pretty scary thought. But the point I make is this: The government was prepared to come into the House and introduce a bill through a private member to take away the Rand formula in Ontario. They were sending a very clear message to the people of Ontario that this government is anti-union, that they do not believe for one second that people should have the right to join unions, that they don't believe that people should have the right to try to negotiate rates of pay to the degree that they should be. They hide behind —

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: They still have some labour laws or whatever, but the reality is the labour laws in this province have been set back so far that it's very difficult for workers to join and to be able to negotiate fair collective agreements, given the particular labour laws that this government has brought through.

This government comes to us today and says, "We want to introduce a bill that's going to say that people who are on workfare are not going to have the right to join a union or go on strike." Excuse me. You just can't take away democratic rights from individuals when you feel like it, and I think it demonstrates that this government really is a government that doesn't believe in rights of individuals as they should exist in a democracy, pure and simple.

The second point I would make is this: I don't believe for one second that workers who are unemployed who happen to find themselves on workfare and are forced into those programs would en masse run and sign cards. I talk to people in my community who are on workfare. The last thing they're talking about is signing cards and joining unions. What they want to do is try to find a job, get a decent salary so they can get on with their lives and provide for their families.

1540

For this government to all of a sudden come back and say, "We need to block these individuals' rights," I think is a bit much. Most people on welfare are all there for the same reason: They're out of work, their UI has run out and they're saying, "I'd like to be able to get back to work, get a half-decent paying job, get back to the life of trying to provide for my family and make a better life for all of us."

This government is saying: "Let's throw them on workfare. They're on welfare because they want to be there and they're a bunch of lazy people. If we don't force them on to workfare, they'll never get off the system." That's the first method this government is setting, and I think that's a terrible message to be sending, because the people in my community on welfare, for the most part, I would say 90% to 95%, want to get off welfare in a big way. The problem is the economy is not providing the kind of jobs that used to be available in our society in the past.

The government will hide behind the figures and say, "We're creating more jobs now than we ever did before, blah, blah, blah." The reality is, put yourself in the place of somebody on welfare. I want you to come to the city of Timmins, I want you to go to the community of Sault Ste Marie, I want you to go to Ottawa, I want you to come here to Toronto and I want to put you in the position of a lot of people I see, who may be 35 or 45 years old, who have worked for a particular firm for a number of years.

For example, somebody in Timmins might have been working in a local mine for a good part of 15 or 20 years and gets laid off because of the economic situation that has happened — no fault of this government particularly, but what's generally happening within the economy — and they find themselves out of work. Here they are all banged up, hurt because of their experiences within the

workplace, their back is not as good as it used to be, their hearing might be a little bit weaker than it used to be because of the noise environment they were exposed to, and they find themselves in the position of having to compete to get a job alongside a young person who's probably better educated, more than likely in better physical condition, and these people who are 40, 45, 50 years old, who are trying to get these jobs in competition with them, are having an extremely hard time.

I see more people in my community, unfortunately — and again, I don't blame this government for all of that problem — that I worked with years ago who are perfectly capable of working today. The problem is that they're a compensation risk and the employers don't want to take a chance on them, or they don't have the level of education that employers are asking for today. That's why they're in the welfare system.

I look at the city of Timmins, for example, when they hire somebody to work on the garbage truck. They ask for a minimum of grade 12. Why? Because the pool of workers available to employers today is much larger. There's more unemployment so they have a better ability to pick and choose who they want to work for them. So they raise the standards of the jobs that are available to people out there and by doing so — not because they're mean people as employers, but because they have the ability to choose the best of the crop, as they say — they end up excluding a whole group of people who no longer qualify. They're a bit too old, they're a bit banged up or they're undereducated to the point of not having a current grade 12 diploma, or whatever it might be. Those are the reasons that people are on welfare.

For the government to come in as they did back when and introduce workfare and say by inference — they won't say this publicly — “If we create workfare, it's going to force people out of welfare,” you might push some people out. There are a lot of proud people in my community. There are people who may not go apply for welfare because they're afraid of the stigma that you're causing in the welfare system, but you're not doing anything to solve the problem. All you're doing is attacking the people most vulnerable, most in need.

Don't shake your head no. Come around Ontario; take a look around. We have more street people today in the city of Toronto and in the city of Timmins than we've ever had in the history of the province.

Mr Klees: Take your head out of the sand.

Mr Bisson: The member says, “Take your head out of the sand.” The reality is you're sending a message saying: “People on welfare are a bunch of lazy bums. If we bring in workfare, it's going to force those lazy bums off the system.” That's what you guys are saying by inference. You're not saying that directly. I don't pretend for one second that the Premier has actually said those words, or the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): He might do.

Mr Bisson: He might say it.

Mr Wildman: He said they drink beer a lot.

Mr Bisson: He said they drink beer. That's a very good comment, the comment of the Premier of about a month ago. The point is, by your actions, that you introduced workfare and the kind of legislation that you have here today, you're by inference saying that people who are on welfare are lazy and if we introduce workfare, they're going to be forced off the system.

Let me remind you, people are on welfare because they are unemployed. They're proud individuals who want to get back to work, they want to participate in our economy, and I would argue that the policies that your government has put forward are doing very little to create high-paid jobs that people want to get in order to get on with their lives. Lots of \$8- and \$9-an-hour jobs, but not a heck of a lot over the 12-hour limit. You people, as far as I'm concerned, are looking for more confrontation by way of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): I sit here and listen to this gentleman talking, the member across the floor from Cochrane South, saying that there was a very peaceful demonstration outside this House. Well, when I came down here, I was democratically elected to represent the people of Etobicoke-Humber. When I pulled my car up outside of this House —

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Ford: — I came down here to represent the people from Etobicoke-Humber. My car was rocked vigorously by a lot of those peaceful demonstrators. Not only are we —

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Ford: Did I let you speak?

Mr Bisson: No, you didn't.

Mr Ford: Oh, I didn't let you speak.

The Deputy Speaker: Speak through the Chair, please.

Mr Ford: Anyway, I had somebody go down the side of my car with a key, cut it all up. I didn't see anybody coming back to offer to pay for it. Not only that, when I got out of my vehicle, I was threatened, abused, spit at and various other things by those nice, friendly people outside this House.

The police were not there at that time, as you mentioned, but these peaceful people told me to stand right outside my car for 15 minutes and they would let me move.

After that — I did not stand for 15 minutes, being democratically elected by many thousands of people in my riding — I pursued the issue to go into this House. They stood in front of me, pushed me, shoved me against the car. We have films of those peaceful demonstrators. I'll tell you one thing: Every member of this House should be protected and every union person should be protected against violent thugs. I want you to understand that. Nobody has to take threats from individuals like that.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I would like to comment in support of the speaker today on

the bill at hand. We are going to find that this bill is simply something that was missed earlier on and required for the government to carry on with what they consider to be one of pillars of their platforms that actually got them elected. What we're going to see is that this, along with several other pillars of their platform, simply is not turning out even as they would like it to be, and we have more and more examples of that.

Just this week in my own city of Windsor, they came to the determination that there's going to be a property tax increase. That has not happened my city for the last eight years and that specifically is being blamed by the city on the provincial downloading which this government has gotten itself involved with in order to move the debt from the province on to municipalities across Ontario. That — the whole discussion of debt and the elimination of the deficit — was a major plank in this government's platform in order to get elected. That too is failing, because all you've succeeded to do so far is move debt from the Ontario level down to the city level, specifically down to the residents and property taxpayers in Windsor.

Many of the members in the House today are coming from ridings that are now seeing increases in property taxes specifically linked to downloading from the Ontario government. It's a fact that you cannot deny is happening. What we have is a move in terms of taxation at one level to another level.

I guess the worst thing is that we knew it was coming, and now it has arrived here in Ontario. We will get to carry on and speak further to this bill, yet another plank in the Ontario platform of the government.

1550

Mr Wildman: I want to congratulate the member for Cochrane South for his remarks. I listened very carefully to what he had to say and I know the sincerity with which he expressed his views.

I also know the member for Etobicoke-Humber was quite sincere in his remarks, and I regret the incident he described, as we all do. I would say, though, that that unfortunate incident should not be seen as a reason to take measures against the rank and file of the labour movement, the vast majority of whom are peaceable, concerned citizens.

This bill is an attack on the labour movement. But more than that, it's an attack on the very people that workfare is supposed to assist. I believe it's an attack on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

One of the basic rights we have in this democracy is the freedom of association. People have the right to join together freely, by their own volition, in any organization that is a legitimate organization in our society, and yet this bill will take that right away from so-called participants, often involuntary participants, in workfare. Any government that purports to be democratic, which dislikes the kinds of incidents described by the member for Etobicoke-Humber, could hardly justify taking away one of the most basic rights of any democracy.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Cochrane South, you can sum up.

Mr Bisson: To the member for Etobicoke-Humber, I don't for one second condone people having the right to use force in any way. That's not the point I'm making here. But what I think I heard the member say, in winding up his comments, is that they were nothing but a bunch of thugs, which I think goes a bit far. I was there. I was on the lawn of that building all morning. I talked to a number of people who were there. Most of the people, 99.9% of the people who were here were doing exactly what the member for Algoma said they were doing. They were exercising their democratic right to gather and to protest what this government was doing.

To refer to them as a bunch of thugs I think makes my point that this government seems to have an idea that it needs to always confront. It has a confrontational way of dealing with people within the labour movement and those people who are less fortunate in our society. I think that sends the wrong tone that we want our government to send to the people.

When it comes to the member for Windsor-Sandwich, I think her point was very well made. In her municipality she is seeing that municipal taxes haven't gone up for the past eight years, and very little before that, within Windsor. Now, because of the actions of this government, and quite frankly their bungling of the whole property tax assessment system, their bungling of the entire downloading agenda that they have, we're seeing taxes in communities like Windsor, Timmins, Toronto and every other municipality in the province go up over the next little while to numbers that I don't even want to contemplate. Some municipalities are talking of increases up to 20%.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Bisson: So much for the last 10 years, because it was under the rule of the last 10 years, under the rule of the Liberal and the NDP governments, that you had stability when it came to property taxes. Now this government is going to allow it to go through the roof.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Klees: I am pleased to rise to participate in this debate on a bill that really does need clarification. I find it interesting that the member for Cochrane South would read into the record a clause of this bill but not take the time to discuss specifically the meaning of what he read into the record. I would like to do it for him and perhaps help him and others to understand a little more clearly what the intent of this bill is.

I read as follows subsection 73.1(2):

"...no person shall do any of the following with respect to his or her participation in a community participation activity:

"1. Join a trade union.

"2. Have the terms and conditions under which he or she participates determined through collective bargaining.

"3. Strike."

What the member for Cochrane South failed to note is that this clause specifically states that this is with respect to his or her participation in community participation. Yes, it's true that this government does not feel it is appropriate

for individuals who are volunteering in a community participation as part of the Ontario Works program to strike, to organize into a union and to organize in effectively a labour type of organization, because under the Ontario Works program the community participation component of Ontario Works that we're referring to here specifically refers to an individual's volunteer activity within a community.

If the member for Cochrane South is suggesting that people who are volunteering in this province, whether that be with the cancer society, the March of Dimes or any other organization, should be organized into trade unions, then let him say so. That's precisely the message that he's giving —

Mr Wildman: These people are participating in workfare; this is not volunteering.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please, member for Algoma.

Mr Klees: The member opposite says, "This is not volunteering."

Mr Wildman: It's workfare.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Algoma.

Mr Klees: The fact of the matter is that it is a volunteer initiative.

Mr Wildman: You lose your income if you don't do it. That's why you volunteer.

Mr Klees: The fact of the matter is that no one in Ontario Works is forced to do anything they choose not to do. Everyone in Ontario Works has an opportunity to be interviewed, to interview the agency with which the community participation is taking place. If there is an objection of any kind to doing that particular volunteer function, they have the option to withdraw. I think it's important that members of this House, and in fact people across the province, understand that is the essence of this program.

In my responsibilities as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services, I've had the opportunity to travel the province over the last number of months. My primary responsibility on those site visits to various areas of the province — I've been to Cornwall, I've been to Windsor, I've been to northern Ontario and southwestern Ontario — I make it a point on those site visits to meet not only with the ministry personnel who have the responsibility to work with municipalities in the Ontario Works program, but I specifically ask to meet with front-line workers who have the responsibility to interview with people on welfare to discuss with them the Ontario Works program and what their options are under the program.

I ask specifically to meet with Ontario Works participants, and these are the people on welfare who are given the opportunity to participate in community participation — workfare, as you put it — and I can tell you the feedback I'm getting from across the province, and it matters not where we are. Overwhelmingly, we are told that this program that gives people an opportunity to participate in voluntary activity within their community is welcomed by workers who understand that it's important for people to

get back into the community, to have something productive to do on a day-to-day basis, to learn some skills, to interact with people, to have an opportunity to meet people in the course of doing that activity. Overwhelmingly, we are told that this is positive.

1600

Mr Wildman: You sound as if this is a church supper.

Mr Klees: Let me correct the record for you, because members previously in the debate on this have suggested that under Ontario Works people are forced to do things beyond their will. That's not true. The fact of the matter is that there is a great deal of choice within this program.

The member for Cochrane South indicated correctly that there are many people who are on welfare. We know they don't want to be there, but one of the reasons they're still there is because there are barriers in their lives that keep them from moving into full-time employment. Many of those barriers relate to perhaps skills, a lack of education.

The Ontario Works program that we're talking about in this province now contains an employment support component that deals specifically with those barriers and it provides people who are on welfare with training, with the opportunity to upgrade their skills, with high school equivalency opportunities. It provides day care support. It provides opportunity for people to move from where they are to where they want to be, to overcome those barriers in their lives.

When we talk about the message that's being given to people in this province about the Ontario Works program, it's not this government that is representing that this is a program that is forcing people to do anything. That is a message that's being perpetrated by members opposite. I should say to you that that is not in the best interests of the people who are depending on social assistance and in fact depending on this program to help them move on into a paying job. That doesn't do anything to support people in the community who need the kind of supports that have been organized into this program.

I would challenge members opposite, the member for Cochrane South, the member for Windsor-Sandwich, to familiarize themselves with the details of the program so that they in turn can help the government help people in their community to ensure that this program is a successful program.

I would like to take a moment and clarify some of the misinformation around this program, and that is, as has been suggested, that if someone is on welfare, the right to participate in union activities is prohibited. The fact of the matter is that anyone can organize or gather in any way they choose. If an individual wants to participate in a union activity, that's their choice. We're simply saying that for the purpose of the volunteer functions that people are performing in the community participation aspect of Ontario Works, organization into a trade union is inappropriate.

If someone has a part-time job and they're still involved in Ontario Works and on welfare, if they choose to organize as a union member through that part-time job,

that's their option. No one is going to hold them back from doing that. So this is not about restricting individuals' rights. It's not about restricting the ability to gather. It's not about restricting freedoms whatsoever. What it is about is giving freedom to people to participate in these community participation programs. Let me explain what I mean by that.

Time and again I hear from municipalities, I hear from organizations that they would like to open up volunteer opportunities within their organizations for people on welfare under the Ontario Works program, but they are being intimidated not to do so, in many cases by labour leaders, in many cases by organizations which are threatening that if they participate in the community participation component of Ontario Works, funding will be cut off to their organization. Where's the freedom in that, I would put to the member for Cochrane South.

Is it not appropriate that as a Legislature we take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that people in our province are free to participate in a program that will help them overcome the barriers that are there in their lives that are between them and a full-time, paying job? That is the objective of this bill: to simply say, "You will be free to participate in community activities without having to be threatened by outside organizations, without having to feel you are doing something that will somehow jeopardize funding of an agency that is going to support or nominate you for participation."

I think all of us in this House will benefit if we come to fully understand the intent of this program and how it works. I'm amazed at the amount of misinformation that continues to be perpetuated across the province around the Ontario Works program. Time after time we are getting examples from individuals who have started in a community participation program as a volunteer, doing meaningful work, involved in an organization where they have an opportunity to meet other people, and who, as a result of having been in a volunteer position for a number of weeks or a number of months, are actually offered full-time jobs in that same organization.

I was recently in Barrie, where I was visiting a nursing home where someone in community participation voluntarily had been placed to do some work in that organization. After some time of being there in that place, interacting with residents in that nursing home, that individual, who had been on welfare for a number of months, was offered a full-time job. Why? Because people had an opportunity to observe the kind of work that was being done, to observe the interaction with the residents in that place. They needed someone to continue to carry on those responsibilities and offered the job.

I was recently in Chatham, where the same story was given us, this time at a day nursery, where someone who had been there as a volunteer was offered a full-time job in that place.

That is the intention of the community participation component of Ontario Works: to give people an opportunity who otherwise would not have the chance to get

back into the community, to learn some skills, to get some education, to meet people.

If we step back and simply take into consideration what is in the best interests of the people I'm sure we're all concerned about, namely, the people on welfare, who I agree are not there for reasons they have chosen — I agree with the member for Cochrane South that people on welfare don't choose to be there. They are there, in most cases, for reasons beyond their control. Whether it be as a result of the loss of a job, a breakup in the family or some other situation that has happened in their lives, they're there; they choose not to be there, but many times there are barriers that keep them there for too long.

The Ontario Works program, and particularly the community participation component of it, which this bill is addressing, is designed to help people take that very important first step, to get back into the community, to become involved in the community, to learn some skills so that they can, if you will, be in the traffic of being recognized by potential employers.

Community participation does not stand alone; it is only one of three components of the Ontario Works program. As I mentioned before, the second component is employment support, through which we provide education, through which we provide many other supports for individuals to get them to the point where they will be employment-ready.

The third component of Ontario Works is the employment placement, where municipalities actually contract with employment placement agencies to help them find that permanent job.

I fail to understand why the members opposite, the members from the NDP and Liberal Party, would actually get up in this House and say they are in support of volunteers in this province and that volunteers within the Ontario Works program should be unionized. I fail to understand how you can justify that, and I frankly look forward to getting some public reaction to the position that the parties opposite have taken on this issue.

1610

I can assure you that everyone I've spoken to sees the legitimate reasons, understands the motivation of our government for wanting to help people on welfare become active, become actively involved in their community. What they don't understand are the demonstrations that are taking place in some places in this province against that activity. They don't understand, whether it be trade unions or whether it be other activists in communities, actually threatening agencies who are volunteering to give that assistance to people on welfare to get that on-the-job, if you will, training experience, to get that community experience. They don't understand that.

I believe at the end of the day, as the Ontario Works program continues to be implemented across the province, particularly with the freedoms that this bill will allow us to extend to municipalities and agencies across the province, that as more and more people are able to leave the dependency on welfare and become active in the community and find those jobs, the wisdom of this bill, the

wisdom of the Ontario Works program, will be recognized.

We today have over a quarter-million fewer people on welfare than we did when we were elected in 1995. Yes, there are many reasons for that, but I can tell you that the fact that this government has come forward and actually put in place a program that makes it possible for people to do something meaningful while they are yet on welfare, gives them a program that helps them train, gives them a program and a means to get into community activity to find that full-time job, without doubt has had a great deal to do with those results. We can report that on a weekly basis, more and more people are moving from the welfare rolls into part-time or paying jobs. And I will say to the member for Cochrane South that, yes, we as a government do believe that any job is a good job, that any job is a stepping stone to the next job. None of us in this place, I'm sure, has had the same job. All of us, I'm sure, have experienced the stepping-stone nature of our careers.

For someone who's dependent on social assistance, we will do what we have to do to help them. We have a responsibility to help people who can't help themselves. But we can't allow people to sit back and not take their personal responsibility as well. So the Ontario Works program, and particularly the community placement component, allows individuals to unleash their personal responsibility, to step forward, to become actively involved.

We believe that in the final analysis, we will look back on this time in the province of Ontario and it will be marked as a major change in public policy as it relates to welfare. More people will be working; fewer people will be dependent on social assistance. More people will have hope in their lives. When we talk about poverty, and particularly child poverty, nothing solves poverty more than employment. There is no better example to children in our province than to have parents who are working, and we believe this program will achieve that.

I challenge members opposite not to stand in the way of achieving that success with us. Let's do this in partnership. Let's do this together, not because it's a policy that we've proposed, but because it's the right thing to do for the people, for the children, of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bisson: The member for York-Mackenzie says he wants to clear the record, that there's a lot of misinformation about workfare. I only can say that this government is an agent of misinformation when you listen to the comments that he makes. He says that we are saying — and that I am saying as a member — that we want to see all volunteers across this province unionized. That's not what I said. If you look at your bill, your bill is specific to people on workfare. It doesn't talk for one second about preventing people from joining unions who are volunteers in community organizations. It says specifically "people in the Ontario Works program." So I would say to the member across the way that he's completely off base when he tries to paint this picture as otherwise.

He is also, I think, announcing a change of policy on the part of his government because he's trying to tell

people that workfare is completely voluntary. I say to the member across the way, next time I have somebody in my constituency office who comes in and says, "I don't want to participate in workfare," I will tell him it's completely voluntary and that the member for York-Mackenzie said that if they refuse to participate in the workfare program in the city of Timmins, they will not lose their cheque. Is that what you're announcing? That's not at all what the policy is. You know full well that if a person says, "No, I'm not participating," they're going to be cut off welfare. That is what's going on.

The other thing is that he cited a person in Barrie who got a job through the workfare program, as if his government came up with some sort of brainchild. Our government introduced what was called Jobs Ontario Training. We put literally thousands of people to work by providing to the private sector the training dollars necessary to hire people who were on welfare into real jobs. We provided them with day care, we provided them with training, we provided them with upgrading, and it was completely successful when it came to what it had to do as compared to this.

I don't have enough time to go on to the rest of it, but I'd love to have another five minutes with this member.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): It's really exhilarating to join in and listen to the remarks by the member for York-Mackenzie, because he argues the case for workfare with a solid base of knowledge, with a cogent approach of tone, and he lays out exactly what we're trying to do with workfare.

I don't want to go into detail —

Mr Bisson: Please don't.

Mr Hastings: Well, I'm afraid we're going to have to because it's important to set the record straight. The member for Cochrane South was saying how great the previous NDP's works program was for jobs when in fact the record shows — I have some files that will indicate that in point of fact it was a great boondoggle for contractors, who would bring people in and show them how to write a résumé and eight months later the same people who had had their hopes raised in the expectation that they would get some kind of job had zilch. They didn't have any job.

There is one thing I want to set on the record and that is, why do the members of the opposition persist in denying people an opportunity to get into the community placement section of this particular program?

I'd like to read for the record from Frank, a woodworker, on Kitchener radio station CKCO, in quoting Steve Parr, who said: "Frank...found a job after nearly five years on welfare. It may have saved his life."

Frank: "One year pass and you don't find a job. Another year pass, you feel down. Like I had many time...I thought I can kill myself. I don't want to live like this any more."

Why would members opposite allow that kind of anxiety to reside in Frank, who got a successful job?

The Deputy Speaker: Member for York-Mackenzie.

Mr Klees: I appreciate the comments from my colleague from Etobicoke-Rexdale. I thank the member for Cochrane South for his comments.

Yes, I will stand by the comments I made that under this program there are choices. People are not forced into specific activities that they have objections to. Under the Ontario Works program, which is mandatory — it is mandatory for individuals to participate in the Ontario Works program — individuals have an option to participate in specific voluntary activities.

The interview process takes place in the same way that it does for employment interviews. Individuals are screened by workers. They are introduced to the agency that has made the volunteer opportunity available. They can be rejected by the agency. The individual has the right to say, "I'm not comfortable in performing this particular volunteer activity." They will be referred on to something that will be more conducive to their skills and to their liking. We will seek as much as possible to make sure that it's an appropriate match for people in this province.

We ask that individuals participate in the training, either in the community participation component or the employment placement of this program. But there is a great deal of choice. That choice is in the best interests of the individual who is involved in the program.

We believe that this bill will open many more doors to individuals in our province who need this opportunity, who want the opportunity, and we urge members of this House to vote for it.

1620

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Pupatello: In the leadoff for my party, I would like to be able to split the time with my colleague from Hamilton East and will be doing so within this next hour.

I am very pleased to speak today to this particular bill, which I think was very inappropriately named. The bill is called An Act to Prevent Unionization with respect to Community Participation under the Ontario Works Act. I would like to ask the government why they've selected that particular title when a much more appropriate one would have been the sleeping beauty bill.

Why do we have this bill here today? Because last fall, on Tuesday, November 4, while our committee was meeting to go over clause-by-clause of this bill, your sleeping beauty from London South fell asleep at committee and he forgot to vote. On a key section, namely, number 73, the vote was lost by the government and the section didn't get passed. That section was, as the Toronto Star quoted it, "Sleeping Tories Let Key Section of Bill Die." That was November 1997, and at that time the minister confirmed that the clause would be reintroduced next year.

Here we are, the next year, under Bill 22, the sleeping beauty bill. But it's been renamed because since that time your whiz kids in the back room decided you'd get political on us. You decided that while you have the opportunity, while you needed to get that little boost with your core supporters who have been driving you to implement workfare because it was a key pillar of your

platform, you needed to add a little bit of politics into this. So you decided to change the name of the bill, and you changed it so you could have one more kick at the labour can while you were at it. The fact is that in the original bill, which is the one we travelled around the province with, section 73 was simply entitled "community participation."

It said specifically, "participation in a community participation activity or a prescribed activity under this act is not employment for the purposes of any act." But that was the one your sleeping beauty from London South missed the vote on. As a matter of fact, I will quote from a newspaper report:

"In addition to a napping Bob Wood, the other Tories were: Tom Froese...who was catching up on correspondence; Bert Johnson...who was reading; and Peter Preston...who was out of the room."

As a result of them not being able to pass this subsection, they missed it. We now have a minimum of seven hours of debate, which is what it will take to introduce this two-page little bill, which is just the subsection that you missed the first time around because one of your members was catnapping in the corner. It's absolutely true.

Not only that, but the section you've included in Bill 22 is section 73. It's the same section of the original bill that he slept through. Why didn't you just stand up and say, when you introduced the bill in the House about three weeks ago: "Our sleeping beauty from London South catnapped through the subsection and we missed the vote. As the result of our sleeping beauty, we missed the subsection —"

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I'd ask you to rule on the member's comments, because I think it's impugning the integrity of the member for London South.

The Deputy Speaker: No, I would say that's not a point of order.

Mrs Pupatello: What the people of Ontario are looking for in government is credibility, integrity and honesty. When you introduce a bill, you should tell people what it is.

The fact is, Bill 22 has one subsection called subsection 73. Truth: Last fall, November 4, in a committee room on the first floor of this main building, your member was immobile for half an hour with his eyes closed. That was widely reported in the press at the time. I have surmised that during that half hour he was likely asleep. At that time, as it was widely reported, there were others out of the room, others reading and writing correspondence. With your subsection not having been passed, your minister, being questioned by the press at the time, said, "We'll have to introduce another bill next year to take care of it," because you needed it for your workfare program. So why not rename it what it really is? The sleeping beauty bill.

But I want to make another point. I started to say earlier that this bill will take us a minimum of seven hours

of debate in the House. Every time government members choose to think that the opposition members are wasting time in this House, they decide to peg a dollar figure to it. You've said, "Every hour we are in this House is \$100,000" — your figure. A minimum of seven hours on Bill 22, the sleeping beauty bill, so your beauty sleeping through subsection 73 will now cost the Ontario taxpayers a minimum of \$700,000. You didn't even tell the public why we are here in the House this afternoon debating Bill 22.

You slept through it, your government members missed the vote. We decided we don't want this bill to pass. That subsection didn't make it. But you have a majority on the committee. You blew it. It was your error, and your sleeping beauty from London South cost the Ontario taxpayers a minimum of \$700,000, calculated at seven hours in this House debating this little subsection.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The member's making a fine speech and there aren't enough Tory members here to hear it. Would you check for quorum please?

The Deputy Speaker: Clerk, could you check for quorum, please?

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

1630

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Windsor-Sandwich.

Mrs Pupatello: The point must be made about the \$700,000. Whether it was a half-hour catnap or a 10-second catnap by the sleeping beauty from London South, needless to say —

Mr Klees: Speaker, on a point of order: Regardless of how attracted the member may be to the member for London South, I believe there is general consensus that the member for London South does not at all resemble a sleeping beauty.

The Deputy Speaker: I take your point of order. I think we are venturing into dangerous territory here. I don't know if "sleeping beauty" is unparliamentary, but I ask the member to refrain from referring to the member for London South that way; refer to him by his riding.

Mrs Pupatello: The point is that when it's convenient to the government to accuse the opposition of wasting House time, you choose to put a figure on it of \$100,000 an hour. The truth is that this bill was called into the House for debate at the very last moment — not because you don't need it, because you do. To enact your Ontario Works legislation you do need this piece. You need it specifically because you couldn't get the subsection passed last November when you were supposed to, with a majority of Conservative members on committee.

The only reason there was a quick switch on what bills would be discussed tonight is because you're having trouble with Bill 15, with your tax assessment bill, which will affect every municipality across Ontario, which changes and limits what cities and towns can do across

Ontario. The only reason this bill is on the House docket tonight is because the first thing this morning, your minister withdrew the other bill that was on. In fact, at 10 o'clock we were notified officially that it was being withdrawn.

Also, we did not discuss the right bill last night, because your Minister of Municipal Affairs withdrew the tax assessment bill last night too. You realize that's the case. You realize that again this morning you couldn't go forward to discuss the tax assessment bill because the treasurers and clerks from across Ontario arrived at Queen's Park yesterday. For the first time in the history of their organization they held a press conference here at Queen's Park in the media studio and decided to lay bare the facts of what on earth you have done to tax assessment in Ontario.

They publicly, for the first time, said, "We are entering into the most chaotic period we will ever see in Ontario," towns and cities across Ontario that will not know the interpretation of the bill that you are trying to shove through so quickly with so many errors. Because they did that yesterday, the minister was questioned in the House. He didn't give sufficient answer. What he said was, "As a matter of fact, while we're speaking here we're having a meeting with them." We found out after the fact that that was not the case. There was no meeting. There still has been no meeting.

What the clerks and treasurers needed by this Friday was to have the bill passed, but they also know that the bill is so riddled with holes that it's not acceptable for use. We know that. We looked in detail at what their summary was. We know they've met with officials of the ministry for a long time and have gotten no answer.

The government has not recognized the chaos they are bringing to bear on municipalities across Ontario through tax assessment. It's so relevant in this discussion tonight that because the minister has now realized that there are panic and chaos to come in this implementation of the new tax assessment scheme, you pulled it from the docket tonight and threw in Bill 22 at the last moment; this which could have come at any time, this which the government needed anyway, this which will have a minimum of seven hours in the House at \$100,000 an hour — a \$700,000 error because you did not pass it in committee last fall. That is the fact.

You should have simply said that's what it was, but you chose at this time, while you had the chance from last November, to take one more kick at the labour can and entitle it — for no good reason, because you didn't have to entitle it this — about prevention of unionization.

Like Buzz Hargrove has been on the phone hour after hour trying to unionize workfare people. You don't think he's got better things to do? I just can't imagine that Buzz Hargrove has had his binoculars peeled for those welfare people: "Boy, we're going to get those into the union." How absolutely ridiculous. This whole thing is just political drivel that gets written by those young whiz kids in the Conservative Party to throw up yet another political

slogan out there for you, to take yet another kick at the labour can.

That's what the bill is about, and I just wish you'd say it. What I wish too is to take copies of the Hansard from the member who just spoke for the government party, because I want him to take this same Hansard and read that same speech to the Tory faithful at your next annual convention. The Conservatives in Ontario, and all the non-Conservatives that voted for the Conservatives in the last government, in the last election they were looking for workfare.

Interjection.

Mrs Pupatello: No, you told them you were going to give them workfare. When you said it to them, whether you said it in black and white, you certainly said it in the back rooms of the big halls during the election. The people of Ontario had visions at the time. Whether you meant to do it or not, what people inferred or gathered from your workfare discussions — when the candidate in my riding stood on the side of any rural road he could with huge three by six signs that said, "Welfare into Workfare" — that was your platform; it was your pillar.

I want to know why this same member, who just spoke in the House tonight on behalf of the Conservative government, has yet to release the numbers of the people who've actually had placements in workfare. I mean really workfare in the last three years of this government. I want that number to be enlarged and pasted up on your walls at the next gathering of your Tory faithful.

I want you to tell the people, because journalists, my own order paper questions — I cannot get answers from the government that will identify how many people are actually enrolled in workfare. Not all the other choices that were always there before, not the other items that were introduced by long-past governments that worked, not that part; I want the work placement part. I want the number. I've asked it on order paper questions and I have not received the response. We have called —

Interjection.

Mrs Pupatello: No, the truth is the numbers are so embarrassingly low that you won't divulge what they are.

"Back at Queen's Park," this is another journalist's report, "the Tories beg to differ. They continue to trumpet the program's success, even when the numbers defy them. Frank Klees, parliamentary assistant to the minister, says: 'It's probably one of the strongest components of Ontario Works.'" He's talking about those real workfare placement now. "We've had excellent success," he said."

But this next headline says, "Fessing Up". "For Toronto it turns out isn't the only laggard. To the west, the city of London has signed up 35. To the east, Ottawa-Carleton is also behind with only 115. But trying to get a province-wide figure on the number of sign-ups is not easy. The Tories, it seems, are having trouble fessing up. The only figures Klees has are totals for the entire Ontario Works program." And I want to be clear about this number.

Mr Klees: 260,000 new jobs.

Mrs Pupatello: I am asking specifically for your workfare numbers because this is your pillar, this is your cornerstone. This is what you went to the electorate with. You said, "We're going to make them work for benefits." You, Minister, have a responsibility now to tell your Tories. Tell them what your numbers are. We can't get your numbers out of your ministry.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): End of the argument, member for Hamilton East.

Mr Marchese: The problem is on the other side.

The Acting Speaker: I don't want to get into an argument with the member from High Park. I would like to have some order.

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: For the purpose of clarification, I think it's important that the House understand that there are some 260,000 people involved in this program today. The member doesn't understand that. I wanted to set the record straight.

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Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I want to be able to hear the member. I don't know whether it's a point of order or not. I have to hear. I want order.

The Chair recognizes the member for York-Mackenzie on a point of order.

Mr Klees: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I wanted to be sure, because there was so much noise going on. The member indicated that she didn't know how many people were involved in this program. It's 260,000-plus who are involved in this —

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Mr Speaker, on a point of privilege: I have been advised by my colleague from Fort York that I was named by the Chair a moment ago and I am puzzled by that. I'm bemused, Speaker, and I wonder if you could guide me in this regard. I confess I was completely overwhelmed with indifference by the speech being given by the member for Windsor-Sandwich, so I don't know for what cause I would be named, sir.

The Acting Speaker: I believe that I mistakenly referred to High Park instead of Fort York. My apology.

The Chair recognizes the member for Windsor-Sandwich.

Mrs Pupatello: What the public of Ontario needs to understand is that this is the government that went into the election with a major pillar and that major pillar was workfare. The way they espoused it during their campaign was, "These people are going to work for their benefits." They didn't tell people that most of the program was going to remain exactly as it had always been for years, that in fact the lion's share of the people were going to still be given opportunities for education, even though since that time the Ministry of Education has made cuts to programs like adult ed and training programs. They are still going to make the same offers of programs that were developed years ago. They didn't tell their party faithful that. They

didn't tell people when they knocked on the doors that most of the program is the status quo.

I want the same speech of the member who just spoke read to the party faithful at the next annual convention. I want him to tell everyone about the volunteer nature of this program, because what strikes me most similarly many, many times is that, depending on the audience, these government MPPs continue to change their script. When they're talking to the party faithful, they tell them, "We're going to get these people to work." Then when they happen to be in a room full of people who — I don't know — maybe they think are concerned with social justice, they start talking about the voluntary nature of Ontario Works and, "Really, we're not forcing people to do anything."

I want the same speech given to the same groups time and time again, and that is not what we have here. At minimum, you could have some integrity about your message. At minimum, you should just do what you said you would do, because you're not even doing that. As a matter of fact — and these are very recent calls that we've been able to establish, actual numbers that are involved — we see that we have only 20 people in the entire Windsor area that are actually involved.

With the new standardized report card that this government has generated, which was developed over the last 10 years, frankly, this government wouldn't even register a one on a report card with the implementation of this program so far — not even a one.

We asked the people in Ottawa. The people in Ottawa haven't even reached 200 yet. You've had three years. You've been in government three years.

When we talk about why this is failing, they say it's labour, it's unions; they won't let the program work. Labour? Unions? Wait a minute. Every time a minister goes to talk to a chamber of commerce in Ontario, they launch into what they view as the success story of the government because they beat down labour with Bill 7, remember? You got rid of those pesky troublemakers right at the beginning of your term. You can't turn around now and say it's that same group that you beat down in your first year that is giving you problems now with workfare. Did it ever occur to you that it may actually be because you cannot write policy on the back of a napkin from the Bradgate Arms, that you might actually have to think policy through a little bit broader than that, and that what worked as a slogan in a campaign is not implementable as policy in Ontario?

Let me give you a little bit of proof, legal implications of the changes to Ontario Works. Let's talk about what's legal. At the very minimum, members who are elected to this office, in particular those who are given cabinet positions, have a requirement to bring laws to the House that are going to stand up to the laws of the land. Ontario Works does not do that.

Ontario Works, with all of its regulations that are still being rolled out, we now know is in violation of the charter. We had a look at this and we said under this some of the welfare regulations that have come in — we're

talking specifically about the use of family status as grounds for discrimination. It is specifically forbidden by the Ontario Human Rights Code. It may also be addressed by the charter guarantee of equal protection of the law without discrimination. Specifically, I'll read section 1. It forbids discrimination in services by establishing the following right: "Every person has a right to equal treatment with respect to services, goods and facilities, without discrimination because of...age, marital status, family status or handicap."

We've seen the government purposely go forward and break its own laws before. The first example that I can recall is Bill 26. It wiped out pay equity. The groups that were bound to receive it took the government to court and won the right to be paid pay equity, even though this same government brought in Bill 26 to wipe out the whole section. Even though they've been taken to court and the government is being forced to pay, the government still is not paying it. That was discovered yet again this week.

Here we have another case. The difficulty with this case is that the people who are being affected by it likely are the same people who will never be able to access the courts. These are the people who more than likely would not have the funding to access a lawyer, to access the legal system. These are the cuts imposed by your government to the legal aid system, so even though it should be available to them, it isn't. The same government cut funding to the legal aid system, so they won't be able to access the courts to understand that the Charter of Rights has been violated.

I guess some people are going to say, "Big deal." But there are a lot of other people, some of whom did vote for you, who think that is a big deal, that we have a Charter of Rights in Ontario for a very good reason and that should be upheld.

At a minimum, that should be espoused by the government itself, that you have an obligation to bring laws into this House, to pass laws, that are actually in favour of the Charter of Rights. Now we see that regulations that are coming in simply are not. Those are not views expressed just by me. We knew that the city of Toronto itself was looking at this very thing. They said very specifically, "Our legal staff are telling us that the regulations treat two individuals with the same needs in very different ways." It's a violation.

You may think it's just us in opposition saying it, but it isn't. They're very qualified, professional people who deal with this law, who deal with the welfare system and who have done so for many years. You need to take these professionals into account, and so far you haven't done that.

I wanted to mention as well comments from Mae Harman. It was very interesting, last night I was able to participate in a bit of a debate that was put on by the association of social workers at the U of T. I met a woman there who I met for the first time several months ago, during hearings on Bill 142. At that time I hadn't met her before, but I was listening very carefully to the presentation that she made on September 30, 1997. She is a representative from the Canadian Pensioners Concerned.

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At the time, I thought she just might be coming to be advocating for the government here because she seemed, at least visually, to kind of fit the pattern of people who might be supporters of the government. I thought: "Well, she's from a seniors group. Seniors have tended, I suppose, to be supportive of Tories historically." I was really surprised by her presentation. It was very poignant. She talked about 1920, the year that she was born. She talked about the trouble that she was having: "We are troubled by the turning of welfare into a loan."

Everyone at the time thought that she was crazy. "We're not turning welfare into a loan." But the government has repeatedly stood up and talked about how the welfare rolls have stopped, and we know that there are people getting jobs because the economy is strong. We also know that a very large number of people are moving from welfare into OSAP and they're not doing so by choice. These people, who know they need to get help to get a job, they know they need to enhance their education, are now being forced to go from welfare into OSAP, which is in fact a loan program.

We know what's happened. Last time, I remember being in the House talking about the big ch-ching and who was really winning when you were forcing people from welfare into OSAP. We talked about the very same family, a single mom who was moving into an educational program now in OSAP, paying through private institutions a very huge tuition for a two-year program. All the supplemental needs, all the funding required to live, plus tuition, was now being funnelled through OSAP and she in fact was part of your statistic of lower cases in welfare. She was. It's not as though she's not on the system, but it's the perfect example of once again moving the debt from Ontario's debt to another level of debt.

In this case, that young woman is now heavily in debt and it's a tragic story. What we knew about this specific woman is that she couldn't finish her schooling because the amount of funding that's allowable under OSAP didn't give her enough money by the end of the month to buy her bus pass, so she couldn't get to her classes to finish the course. So what happened? By the middle of the program, which is at the end of just this first year, she now had an enormous debt, she didn't have the certificate that she had gone to school for, and she wasn't on welfare. She was absolutely nowhere, and she had a \$40,000 debt.

She's part of the stats that the member from the Tory party just talked about, the fabulous workings of the welfare program. She's part of your statistic, and the government refuses to acknowledge these kinds of problems in the system that it introduced.

It doesn't even say that in Bill 142. It doesn't say that's what's going to happen to people, but in almost every section it says "except as prescribed." All of the regulations that you've advanced very slowly over time, over these last six months, have left people in the lurch like this. If the member from the opposite side could acknowledge that people are in this predicament most of the time because they don't want to be there and because

they've had life happen to them, then why can you not acknowledge that you have a system in place that is not working for everybody?

What we found out in fact in our calls to several cities is that the numbers are so poor that it's no wonder you won't answer our order paper questions. Our questions were very simple. We want to know exactly how many people are in the placement program. Here you have all of these requirements, four of them: Satisfy community participation; participate in employment measures; accept and undertake basic education; accept and maintain employment. Most of those things are not new at all. I just want to know the number that's in the new part you added, because that's the thing that you got elected for.

Why you won't give me the answer is intriguing to me. Don't give me the 200-and-something-thousand number, because that number is not the truth. That's the number the lion's share of which has always been in every other section of the bill that had been there for some time. Only the new section, that's what I want to know. That's the part you went to your Tory faithful on at your last convention. That's what you get standing ovations for from your communities, from your supporters. But you won't tell us that.

Why, if it really is your pillar, will you simply not give us the information? Some of you I think genuinely want to know. Some of you must think that I would not spend a Thursday afternoon here just to say something. I want to honestly contribute to this matter. I honestly want to make people understand. You were elected on this platform. Give us the answer, then. Tell us what the number is in that new section you added to this bill.

Mr Ford: You don't want to listen.

Mrs Papatello: That's the answer we get, then. We get absolutely nothing. What we get is what the press gets. What the press gets is the same thing: "Tories, it seems, are having trouble fessing up. The only figures are for the entire program, not the new complement." That's what I'm getting today as well. There is some reason you've elected not to be so forthcoming.

I was mentioning earlier about the biggest tax hike to hit Windsor since 1990, "Tax Hike Biggest Since '90." What's quite interesting about this report in today's paper is that the city blames provincial downloading for the first major boost in eight years.

The truth is that you elected to effect your platform on the backs of my city's residents, property taxpayers. As if this were the only city this was happening to. We are getting more and more reports now, as they try to get through their deliberations of their budgets, that they're increasing taxes at the property tax level.

You came in here saying that there's only one taxpayer. Now we are getting all this evidence of new user fees. Within the first year of your mandate, you had introduced 1,008 new user fees. That too is coming from the same taxpayer.

So here we have the two biggest pillars of your government's election. You talked about the income tax cut, you talked about the deficit and the debt and you talked about workfare. If you hadn't given the income tax cut,

you would have already balanced your budget. I find that quite interesting. If that was so important, you should have done it firstly.

Every other economist acknowledges that the growth in our economy today is due in large part to the increase in trade. We also know that the increase in trade has the most to do with the Canadian dollar value as well as low interest rates. Economists are telling the government that as well, that you could very well have saved your tax cut. You could have had your books balanced by now, but you chose not to do that. Moreover, the fact that you are still in debt and you have downloaded your responsibility on to cities and towns across Ontario, this is what you're causing to happen now, this is the unintended consequence of your policy-setting: that the residents now in the city of Windsor are paying more, but they're paying more at the property tax level instead of the income tax level.

I guess the point is that it's really not lost on Ontarians. When you see all of the media reports and they do their interviews with the readers, people say: "I have noticed nothing. I have not noticed a difference." You're paying, you're paying, you're paying. You're paying in user fees, you're paying in property tax increases, and you're still paying. In the meantime, I think we just have to remember the simple fact is that this government has been given the same rating by bond agencies that the NDP government got, and you're still there, even with your fiscal policies.

Clearly we have two significant planks of the Tory election and both of them are failing. Your workfare failure will probably be the biggest legacy you will leave. If some of the members choose to look so intently this way, I suggest that you be as interested as I am in finding out what the real numbers are for your placements, because I will tell you that in your new standardized report card, you would not even register a one.

1700

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I am certainly pleased to join in the debate and follow the words of my colleague from Windsor-Sandwich, who has expressed very well the difficulties with workfare and who has expressed very eloquently the pitfalls and the shell game this government is playing when it comes to workfare.

What this bill is all about and what workfare has continued to be all about is nothing more than a simple exploitation of some of the most vulnerable people in our society. This government won an election on pushing hot buttons. You ran an election frankly not giving a damn whom you're going to hurt, how you're going to hurt them.

You decided that the way you were going to get elected was to blame people: "We have a problem with welfare, so let's blame the welfare recipients. You see, it's those lazy bums, it's that laid-off steelworker, that laid-off construction worker, who are to blame for our welfare problems because they don't want to work. They don't want to make \$60,000 a year at Stelco or Dofasco. They want to be on welfare making \$700 or \$800 a month." So you exploited those individuals.

You decided you were going to attack employment equity so you exploited minorities and women in this province. You ran an election campaign and have continued a pattern of exploitation, of abuse, of the politics of division. The most vile, hatred type of politics that exist in a democratic society you have practised to a fine art. You've exploited the politics of division in this province to an end that no other government ever has or ever will in the history of this province and this country.

You decide it's okay by adding, by subtracting: "Do you know what? We will lose those folks, but it's okay. It doesn't matter how we hurt them, because there's a whole bunch on this other side that we'll gain from." Workfare is a classic example of that type of mentality, of that type of exploitation.

My colleague mentioned the real numbers on workfare. You run around and take credit for 200,000 or 300,000. The next thing you know it will be half a million or whatever numbers you choose to place on that. Again, the question has not been answered. How many of those placements are new? You think you can fool the public. What you have done is — and the minister knows this and the members of the government caucus know that — you have taken programs that existed.

Municipalities have run good back-to-work training programs for years. They didn't need the brain waves of Mike Harris, David Tsubouchi and Janet Ecker to figure this out. There have been very successful programs in place that municipalities have operated over the years. What you have done is you've taken those programs and you've put them under the umbrella of workfare and said these are all workfare placements. That is bogus; that is phoney.

What you need to do is come clean and tell the people of Ontario how many new placements have occurred since you've brought in workfare. You look at the amount of money that you have budgeted for workfare and compare the value of that, and compare the facts that first of all, you're not getting the bang for your buck; and secondly, that the programs are not doing anything the help welfare recipients get off welfare and into the workforce. Sure, you've lowered the numbers. How have you lowered the numbers? You've cut the benefits. You've cut the eligibility. You've shifted them to OSAP. You've put them on to food banks, you've put them on to shelters and you've put them out on the streets.

That is not how you deal with the welfare problem in this province, or anywhere else across North America. States that have tried programs such as you have have failed miserably. What we have seen here is simply a public relations exercise that is costing taxpayers in this province hundreds of millions of dollars.

What is most disgusting about all this is that you don't care whom you run over in your process. You don't care whom you hurt. Your welfare policies are a classic example of that. You came in and you blindly cut benefits by 22%. You said to 500,000 kids across this province who are dependent on welfare: "You've got too much money. You're living too well. We're going to punish you.

We're going to punish you for being poor and we're going to punish your parents for being unemployed. We're going to punish your parents because they may have a drug or alcohol problem or they may have a disability. We are going to punish you."

What you did in your first action with great fanfare when you took office was you said to 500,000 kids: "Tough luck. We're going to cut the amount of money you get for food, for coats, for shoes, for shelter by 22%." Explain to me how that helps kids in this province. Explain to me how that helps the 500,000 kids when you've decided that they now have to go to a food bank or maybe a shelter or maybe they'll have to go a winter without boots or a coat because you thought those kids were living way too high off the hog on benefits across Ontario. That was the first step in your platform. It pushed the hot button, it exploited a hot button, but it hurt a hell of a lot of people.

You don't seem to understand that. You pound your chest and you're proud of the fact that you've cut welfare benefits by 22% in this province. That is disgraceful; that is demeaning; that is exploiting; that is hurtful. But it doesn't matter, does it? It doesn't matter because the folks at the Albany Club don't get affected by that. The rich folks you represent don't care. As you're walking through the Albany Club, you just close your eyes and step over that homeless person sleeping on the street whom you have forced there. Workfare follows those patterns.

Workfare doesn't do anything to get anybody back to work. It doesn't get anybody off welfare. It simply labels and exploits. That's all you've chosen to do. You can say, "You know, those bums, we want to get them back to work." Again I challenge the minister or members of the government to tell me how workfare is going to benefit, how 10 or 15 or 20 hours of volunteer work are going to help a construction worker or steelworker or factory worker in my riding who's been forced on to welfare as the result of a job loss. I resent the fact that you think those people are lazy. I resent the fact that you think you've got to cut their benefits and you've got to force them into programs. I resent that fact. That is what you're basing it on because that is clearly the philosophy you have in dealing with welfare recipients. If you didn't think that, you wouldn't cut their benefits.

If you thought they were motivated, you wouldn't force them into workfare. You force them into a program that has no benefits whatsoever except to make you feel good. Ultimately, you will expand this program to do slave labour for private sector firms. Mark my words, that is where you're moving because workfare is not working. It's not working because the agencies that are in the business of helping the needy are not going to participate in your exploitation of the needy. They've made that clear to you. That is why your numbers are not where they want to be. That is why you've rolled all the programs together. That is the simple truth of what is happening here.

Explain to me again how forcing someone, who has worked 10, 15 years and gets laid off, into sweeping floors or painting park benches or answering phones somewhere

is going to get him back. These people don't need your self-dignity that you're trying to impose them. I resent the moralistic, holier-than-thou approach that you take when you say, "We need the dignity of work, damn it." Most of the people on welfare know the dignity of work. They don't need you to teach them that lesson. That's what you base it on. You don't base it on meaning well or trying to help people. It is cheap, sleazy political points.

Every time you're down in the polls, you go into your little bag of tricks of welfare reform and you bring another measure up. I remember when Minister Tsubouchi brought it in. I was the social services critic at that time. We stood in the House and tried to get some answers on how this program was going to work. You didn't have a clue, the Premier didn't have a clue, still today you don't have a clue, but you know what? Your focus groups, your public opinion polls told you it won't work, damn it, and whom it hurts.

This bill here is a continuation of that exploitation and that attack. It is anti-union; it is anti-worker; it is anti-poor. How dare individuals whom you work, whom you force into programs, try to organize? How dare they try to have some rights in Ontario in 1998 under a Conservative government? How dare those people try to defend themselves? You'll fix them, you'll take care of them, and you know what? If that doesn't put them in place, you'll come back with even more hideous legislation to put them in place.

We have seen programs that work. In my own municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth I chaired health and social services for five years. I know the programs that work. We had a program called Helping Hands before your government ever came along. These are programs developed by previous Tory, Liberal and NDP governments. These programs took the hardest-to-employ young people who had been out of work, who had drug or alcohol problems, who had literacy problems and put them into meaningful training programs that involved classroom experience, that involved résumé writing, that involved on-the-job training. Those programs worked. We had a 70% success rate in some of the hardest-to-employ young people who had been on welfare.

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Why did it work? Because it was tailored to individuals. Programs were not just across the board, forcing everybody into it whether they wanted to or not. They dealt with the individual. They tailored a program. There was an expenditure. There was a follow-up. There was training. You weren't simply thrown into a volunteer situation to comply with your 10, 15 or 20 hours of work.

We had a job-finding club that dealt with people 50 and over who were on welfare. There was 60% to 70% success there as well, because those programs were tailored to individuals.

Don't think that you have somehow come up with something revolutionary here. What you have done is you've taken programs that were in place, you've cut funding to municipalities to run those programs, you've cut welfare funding, and you've labelled them all under

workfare. You think somehow that is going to fix the problem.

We're going to have a lost generation here. I hope this government understands that. We're going to have a group of people going through your programs who are bitter, who are angry, who are disillusioned, who are no closer to finding a job today than they were before you brought in workfare.

If you were really committed to the workfare program, and if you do your homework and look at programs that have worked in other provinces, in other jurisdictions across North America, there has to be an investment, a financial commitment. It is not cheap; it is expensive in the short term. There is a long-term payback, there is a long-term gain, but in the short term governments have to make some real, substantial investments in people, in training, in education, in long-term skills upgrading; not the feel-good quick fix that you're promoting and suggesting here.

But you know what? That doesn't sound as sexy. That doesn't force people. That doesn't give you a chance to pound your chests and say: "Hey, folks, we're fixing those bums. We're getting them back to work, damn it."

If you look at jurisdictions where programs have worked, it has involved a number of measures. It has involved getting long-term skills and basic adult education. What have you done? You've cut adult education. How can you on the one hand sit here and say, "We want to get people back to work," and then cut the programs that are supposed to help those people go back to work? How do you benefit a welfare recipient by cutting funding for adult education? How can those folks get the skills, the upgrading, the education and the training they need when you've cut those funds? They don't, but you don't care.

What money have you put into long-term skills training? Maybe the minister or another member can tell me what money you've put into skills training, real long-term upgrading in skills so that people who have lost their jobs because of downsizing, because of the economy, because of plant closures can get into something substantial, into a job that's going to last for a period of time, into a job that's going to bring in a decent income — not into a minimum wage job that keeps them in that cycle.

You've taken these benefits away. You've taken incentives away. There used to be programs that would give people an opportunity to work part-time and still continue to collect some benefits. If you didn't make enough money, you could still ensure that your kids, if you were poor, had an opportunity for prescription drugs, for glasses, for dental care. Parents didn't have to choose. You've taken those programs away.

Everything you have done has hurt individuals who are trying to break the welfare cycle. Yes, there is a small percentage of individuals who are what we call generational welfare recipients. That's been common and that will be there forever. Yes, there is a small percentage of individuals who are not motivated and frankly have no intention of getting off welfare, but that is a very small percentage. That does not reflect the vast majority of

welfare recipients in this province, and your attitude is that it does.

Programs that have worked have also meant an investment in child care to give parents the opportunity to go into a program, to go to work and know that their child is safe and being well looked after and not in unregulated, for-profit child care that you have introduced in this province.

All of the real characteristics that you have in your workfare program totally contradict all of the experiences where programs have worked. I find it insulting that this government expresses the cockiness and the arrogance it does towards their welfare reform. I frankly don't know sometimes how you can look at yourselves in the mirror and sit there with a clear conscience and believe in your heart of hearts, away from politics, that you're not hurting people. I don't understand how you can do that. I find it offensive how you continue to exploit and abuse, and it is abuse. What you're doing in your welfare cuts amounts to nothing more than government child abuse, nothing more than that. That is exactly what you are doing by cutting those benefits. That is exactly what you are doing by forcing people into programs simply to make you feel good, by cutting funding to municipalities.

You don't understand the cause often of welfare. If you look at the statistics and you look at the numbers, most people do not stay on welfare for years and years, as you believe they do. Most people are on welfare a short period of time, three to six months. That is an average. When you look at the statistics that every municipality can provide to you, the reasons why individuals have got on to welfare are generally economic or job loss.

The mentality of your program was set by Mike Harris as leader of the third party. I remember under the NDP government, I believe, he paraded this woman forward who was making \$40,000 or \$45,000 a year and said: "It's cheaper, it's better for this woman to go on to welfare. She'll make more money." Mike Harris brought forward an individual making over \$40,000 a year, paraded her in front of the cameras, totally misinformed, and said, "This person can make more money on welfare than she can working for over \$40,000 a year." It took less than four hours for that myth to be blown out of the water completely and for every credible welfare official, civil servant in this province who dealt with that to say, "You are wrong."

But that was the mentality. That was the mentality that drove workfare. It didn't matter to Mike Harris that he was wrong. It didn't matter to Mike Harris that when he brought this woman forward he had the wrong facts and figures and, no, she could not make more money on welfare than she did working. It didn't matter because it pushed a button and that button was to exploit welfare recipients, and that was the mindset.

There was no depth in your workfare program. You didn't have a clue when you proposed workfare how it was going to work. You stood in front of that sign, "Ontario welfare population: 1.3 million," I believe it was. That was your big election — you stood in front of

that sign, again somehow blaming the victims. Punishing people because they were poor was the answer to your problem.

I challenge ministers and members of this government to spend a day in a welfare office or spend a day with a case worker when they do house visits. I challenge you to do that. Just one day, that's all, and then get a sense of what it's all about. I challenge you to spend a day in a shelter or spend a day in a food bank and then see what it's all about.

Frankly, it's easier to sit here in this ivory tower of ours, within these confines in this wonderful building, these great walls, and to blame those folks for the situation they're in. It registers well. Your focus groups tell you that; your pollsters tell you that. But at the end of the day, I believe that in government we have a responsibility, a bigger responsibility than simply cheap political points and cheap exploitation. We have a responsibility to bring in real programs that work, real programs that help get people off welfare, real programs that mean long-term, sustainable employment.

You believe that everything that goes well in this province you can take credit for; everything that goes lousy, it's either the welfare recipients or the labour unions or the federal government or some other body who's to blame.

You take all this credit for the job creation. If you go to another province, they take credit for it. The federal government takes credit for it. Frankly, had there been job losses in this province, as there were in 1990-95 through the recession, I don't think too many government members would stand and say, "It's our fault." You'd blame the other side.

Don't overestimate our importance in here in regard to job creation, folks. Don't overestimate the wonderful role you think you have in changing this world or this country, because many of those factors are well beyond our control, your control.

The NDP was not totally responsible for what happened between 1990 and 1995. Any government would have faced some difficult times and conditions. Any government would have faced some of those difficulties. There was a recession. There were economic conditions way beyond our boundaries. Frankly, any government that would have taken today would have benefited from the upturn of the economic conditions that we face today, whether it had been a Liberal, NDP or Conservative government. So don't give me your arrogance and your cockiness to suggest that you're responsible for job creation in this province.

1720

We talk about the great fiscal responsibility of this government. They talk about spending. Your government, by the time the time your mandate is over and the people of Ontario give you the quick, swift boot in the butt that you deserve, will have brought up expenditures for the accumulated debt in this province by \$20 billion. You have taken a deficit of almost \$100 billion to \$120 billion. Is that fiscal responsibility? Borrowing money for a tax cut, is that fiscal responsibility? You're not going to fool the public.

Yes, you can talk about job creation and you can accumulate what everybody does and take all this wonderful credit for it. The reality is that Ontarians are not going to be fooled by all your public relations efforts, all your spin doctors, all your consultants. All the hundreds of millions of dollars you spend on spinning are not going to work because the public is starting to see very clearly through what you're doing.

Let me tell you, this bill that we're discussing today, this workfare program, is going to go down as one of the legacies of mismanagement, one of the legacies of abuse, one of the legacies of exploitation of this government, and nothing else. You're going to look back years from now and you're going to regret what you have done to people in this province. You're going to have to look those 400,000 or 500,000 kids in the eyes and tell them why you've cut their benefits by 22%, tell them why they can't have an extra pair of boots, or why they have to go to a food bank. Look them in the eyes and tell them that. Don't stand in here and pound your chest and talk about your polls and your arrogance and your cockiness. Look at those kids and explain to those kids what you've done to them.

Explain to the single mom why she can't buy shoes for her kids this winter. Explain to her. Explain to her why you think it's beneficial to force her into a program of no benefit and tell her why you believe it is more important for cheap, political, sleazy exploitation. You have to live with your conscience and you'll have to live with the consequences of your actions.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Marchese: I want to congratulate the two Liberal members who have spoken, the members for Hamilton East and Windsor-Sandwich, and particularly say that I enjoyed the social democratic speech by the member for Windsor-Sandwich because it indeed was a very social democratic speech. It's the kind of thing you will hear from me in a little while.

I too, like her and the member for Hamilton East, decry and attack the policies of this government in terms of the effects it has on very vulnerable people. I remind you that 50% of these people on welfare are young kids, and that's the effect that your policies have on families, but particularly young children.

I too have been one of those who attacked federal policies for a long time. You will recall that the Tories did this in 1989-90, when they began to reduce the benefits that would come to the provinces as it relates to issues of post-secondary education, social assistance and the like. We used to cost-share between us and the federal government, and you will recall that the Tories decided they would no longer share 50-50 between the provinces and the federal government. That was the beginning of the assault on provincial governments, particularly Ontario, when we got into power and experienced the recession and all of a sudden were hit with federal cutbacks. The federal Liberal government as well continued with that policy, where the cap on the Canada assistance plan hurt us tremendously. So we were on our own as a provincial government.

I've got to tell you that I decry the policies of this provincial government, as I decried the cutback policies of the federal Liberal and Conservative governments as well.

Mr Hastings: I would like to set the record straight with regard to some of the rather questionable remarks made by the member for Hamilton East. I'd like to quote actually from what was called at that time the Ontario Liberal Plan, their red book — "gliberal" might be more appropriate — where it says, dealing with workfare: "All others now on the welfare system will go into the new Ontario transitional incentive program (OTIP). We believe that people who are unemployed will always choose to upgrade their skills and to work" — it sounds like workfare, doesn't it? — "if given a chance and the proper support. However, when people who are able to work refuse to participate in any of these programs, they will receive only a basic allowance that reflects the national average and is less than the current allowance."

In other words, the member for Hamilton East is actually denouncing the program that he and the member for Windsor-Sandwich ran under in 1995.

What is absolutely more fascinating about the "gliberal" plan is that on page 19 of this document there is a quote which just about bowled me over. It talks about dealing with youth unemployment. They actually did at that time recognize the problem. It says: "Policy commitment. A Liberal government will create a young Ontario Works program for 17- to 25-year-olds." If the workfare program is such a drastic problem, why then doesn't he offer a solid, more specific alternative than he has in his remarks today, or at least re-endorse what they had in this "gliberal" plan?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Windsor-Sandwich has two minutes to respond.

Mrs Pupatello: I would like to remind Ontarians of what we were doing today, and that was talking about the sleeping beauty bill, the bill that the government was forced to introduce because last fall at committee your member for London South fell asleep at the table. The vote didn't pass, the subsection didn't pass and you were forced to bring in this section 73 today at \$100,000 an hour in this House, for a minimum debate of seven hours, at a total cost of \$700,000. I think that is the most telling.

My colleague from Hamilton East also addressed the whole issue of mismanagement of government, of policy that cannot be implemented because quite simply it was written on the back of a napkin some night with a bunch of young whiz kids around, no supportive documentation you could find that would show you a workfare program that actually worked. We have found all the examples and all the problems with it, and you've decided to go down that same road. What have you discovered? The same problems, which is exactly why we cannot today get in real numbers those who are actually placed in the workfare that you sold to your voters in the last election.

We have order paper questions out there that we cannot get answers to. We are calling your ministry. You will not give us the answers. You are quoted in the press as government saying, "We don't know those kinds of

specifics." I will continue to press you for those specifics because it was your pillar. You ran on it. All your candidates did. You had better come clean with the very fact that this is one of your largest failures of government. Let us call it what it is.

The sleeping beauty bill that we addressed today is the best example of the biggest failure this government has made since June 1995.

1730

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Marchese: I am happy to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 22. I will begin by saying that I had an opportunity to listen to my friend from York-Mackenzie, and I've got to tell you it was really hard to take. I listened to the whole 20 minutes because through the things that he said he attracted my interest. He said things such as this: "This is a program that is about volunteers. They're not forced to do any of this stuff. They volunteer to do it." He said: "Organizing in a trade union is inappropriate. This bill is not about restricting rights or ability to gather." I will show you by the title that this is totally unsound as a statement.

I like this one, Frank: "This bill gives them freedom to participate." I love that.

What I like is how you said it in the same way that the Minister of Education does it, and the Minister of Health as well. I love their monotonous drone. I have to tell you, you do the same kind of thing. You looked serious, you sounded serious. It was good.

I suspect that some people listening to you probably said, "He sounds like a reasonable guy, yes."

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): He is.

Mr Marchese: I know. When the Minister of Education speaks, people listen to him and say: "He's so smooth, not slippery or reptilian, no, no. He's smooth, honey sounding, the kind of guy you want as your father, or next door."

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm overcome by the compliments, and I really would ask you to stop the member. This is difficult for me to take.

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: I wanted him to have that opportunity so the people could be reminded of the style. It's full of honey. It sounds full of reason. A good-looking man, I would say. Who would disbelieve a person like that when they say, "This bill is full of misinformation by the opposition"? One might be tempted to believe him because of the nature in which he said it, right?

What else does he say? He says that some unions are preventing these poor people from working because they are intimidating those poor organizations from taking this program on, and he asks, "Where's the freedom in that?" — supposedly meaning that this bill would prevent that kind of stuff from happening, I would think. We'll get to that in a moment, if I can.

Then he says they're free to participate now without having to feel intimidated, more or less.

It was pretty hard for me, I have to tell you. I know that he's part of the same choir — monotonous baritone kinds of voices. We don't get too many sopranos on the other side, except we hear the soprano kinds of effects when these bills are put into effect. But the presentation is more baritone in style. It's a fine Tory choir, a good family values kind of crowd.

I wanted to begin by saying it was difficult to stomach. I had to hold it in. I just thought I'd tell the public that so they have the benefit of that. But I want to get to the title of the bill. I'm going to stop praising the member for York-Mackenzie — I think I've done enough praising — and move on to the bill, and speak about the title.

Now, the title is called An Act to Prevent Unionization with respect to Community Participation under the Ontario Works Act, 1997. That's the title. I know the member for York-Mackenzie loves the title, I appreciate that.

My local newspaper, in one of the editorials, says this — because they too have felt rather awed at the strange nature of this particular title versus so many other titles that I will cite — only a few examples, because I don't have the time. They said, "This bill might have appropriately been labelled 'An Act to allow grateful participants in the Ontario workfare program to maximize their opportunities for morally beneficial labour while being freed from the onerous and detrimental financial responsibilities that would undoubtedly be associated with joining a union'."

It's beautiful, isn't it? Because that's exactly the kind of stuff you Tories are normally used to. So when you get a title that is so bold, so naked, I would venture to say —

Hon Mrs Ecker: We don't do that.

Mr Marchese: It's an acceptable term. It is completely without any fig leaf whatsoever, right? It is raw. Why it is that this government would do that — I tell you, this is an obscenity, I would put a fig leaf on this title, indeed I would, as you normally do with the titles of your bills.

A moment just to illustrate. I made some references to indicate the kind of stuff these fine people on the other side do. I'll try to find a few, but it took a bit of time.

I've got to compliment you. The job quota was another raw one. It wasn't a correct one, because "job quota" had nothing to do with the employment equity bill, but that too was rather raw. You didn't put a fig leaf on that one. That was good. That was really getting to the visceral susceptibilities of people. You did well with that one.

Another one here: Government Process Simplification Act. Do you like that, Speaker? Government Process Simplification Act. Beautiful, because when you want to cover something, you hide it with a fig leaf. "Simplification Act." Brilliant. That's why you hire people over there; you hire them to do this kind of stuff.

Let me get to another example. Here it is: Fewer School Boards Act. That's a good one. You decimate boards, and you have fewer there to communicate the intent of what you want to do. Don't tell them what it's about.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: It's true. You're quite right. It's almost as raw as the other one. You're quite right.

Here is the other one: Red Tape Reduction Act. I love that.

Here: Streamlining of Administration of Provincial Offences Act. "Streamlining," right? Love it.

The Water and Sewage Services Improvement Act. I love the word "improvement," because whenever you're about to whack somebody over the head, you call it improvement.

Remember too the Tenant Protection Act. Did you like that one? I loved that one, because that really was about how you support your big-buddy friends, the ones with the grana, the ones with the — M. Leach, mon ami, with the pecunia, the deep pockets.

Mr Klees: Why don't you choose a word in one of the official languages?

Mr Marchese: The grease.

But this title is particularly bold. They wanted to directly communicate a message to the public. They wanted, through this, to say, "Look, folks, this is about unions, and don't you hate those bloody unions out there?" They expect people to say, "Yeah." Isn't that right, Minister? You know that's what it's about. When you want to be as naked as such, you want people to see exactly what you want them to see.

So I was very astonished, because you normally put these people to work, the brilliant young men you've got — and young women, I suspect; that's probably true — to come up with some good stuff, right? On this one, you said, "I got it." Mr Harris, the Premier, said: "Oh, no problem, we don't need to belabour this particular problem. The staff is so busy. I've got the good one." He came up with a good one. It probably didn't take him more than a minute.

On the title itself, it clearly speaks to what this government is all about. I thought the Premier had become a little gentler in the last couple of weeks or months.

Hon Mrs Ecker: It's my bill.

Mr Marchese: Oh, come on. It's your bill? Please. I know you introduced it, but the Premier has a lot to do with what passes or not. This is the misunderstood Premier, a "I'm just a soul whose intentions are good; oh, Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood" kind of guy. We thought he had acquired this more pussycat, gentle kind of stance, because he was particularly worried that people were beating him up, saying: "Mike Harris is a tough guy. Not only is he tough, he's bloody mean." He didn't like that image.

1740

He wanted to change the image because he was tired of being a tiger. But on this particular issue the fangs are coming out again. He does two things here. He accomplishes two things with this particular bill. He goes after unions —

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Come on. He does go after unions. How does he do it? Indirectly. He goes after people who he says should not be able to unionize and he goes after unions by clearly working on feelings people have about

unions and reminding them how evil they are, right? Yes, that's what you guys are all about.

Your subsection provides, according to the government's general overview of its provisions, that under the Labour Relations Act participants in a community placement activity "shall not join a trade union, bargain collectively or strike with respect to their community...." We believe this is not constitutional. I guarantee to you, folks, and your lawyers, and you've got a few on the other side — I hope the Attorney General is not going to advise you on this, because he's been pretty shaky in the last couple of years in terms of his advice, so I wouldn't go to the Attorney General, with all due respect.

Check out a few other lawyers in the back bench and see what opinions they might have on this matter. Mr Tilson's a lawyer. He might have an opinion; I'm not sure. But I guarantee that this is an unconstitutional bill. The right of individuals or "participants," in the language of Madame Ecker, to form or join a union is a fundamental right. It is guaranteed in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is guaranteed there. So this bill, in my view, runs contrary to the content of the Charter of Rights and I believe you'll see a challenge in this regard. I know you don't believe it. I know you checked with some fine people in your benches, but I think you're on the wrong side of this particular issue.

Will the Tory government invoke section 1 of the charter to deal with this particular issue, which provides that certain rights might be subject to such "reasonable limits...as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society"? Would you use that section? That's what governments do when they want to use that section to beat something else down, right? But it's really got to be evil, Minister Ecker. It's got to be an evil kind of thing. To organize in the form of a union is hardly the kind of stuff that I think you could quote section 1 on.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Why would I be interested in that?

Mr Marchese: I think you are. I think your bill does that. Your bill is quite explicit — naked, I argued earlier. It is an act to prevent unionization with respect to community participation. You might have an interpretation which is interesting. I say that this says they can't join a union. To prevent them means they can't join a union. It'll be interesting to see what interpretation we get on this as we go along.

I would say the job of the Attorney General should be to tell her that the bill tramples on fundamental rights. But clearly, from listening to the minister shaking her head in denial, obviously she already got the advice, "It's okay, you're on the right track, it's fine." Other people don't believe you are.

I was reading another individual who wrote a good article, a Mr Adams. He's professor emeritus and past director of McMaster University. He made some interesting comments about this whole thing. He was horrified. Minister Ecker might say: "It's okay if a few professors out there are horrified by this stuff. That's the chance we take when we attack welfare recipients." If some poor professor, who probably is retired, is offended she might

say, "That's okay," because as long as the majority of the public says, "You're right on, Ecker; go after those welfare recipients; we're behind you," as long as those folks are behind her, and the Premier, she's on the right track.

I'm assuming that's the politics of it, because the politics have nothing to do with facts. The member for York-Mackenzie says: "There's a lot of misinformation. Let me talk to you about facts." He gives you a few numbers and he says, "These are the numbers."

But there's no fact attached to this. This program is a complete failure. We know that. But you can't afford to go out and give the facts, because if you did, those poor people who support you would say, "What the heck is this incompetent government all about?" I've got to tell you, you've demonstrated incompetence in many, many areas. I've been telling you that with every speech I make.

It is up to you to point out the facts, and you will not do that. What is important to you is the perception you create out there, because that's more powerful than fact. The perception you want is to be able to go out there and say: "We're after you. We're after those welfare bums." What you want is for people to say: "That's right. That's what we want." It doesn't matter what you do as long as you say you're say after them, because you know that is what many people in society are feeling. You are promoting a feeling that is negative against all welfare recipients. You promote that. You have been promoting it since the election and post-election, and that is the nature of the politics of this fine, family values, Tory caucus choir that sings the same tune day in and day out.

The professor emeritus said, "Freedom of association has been well established as a fundamental human right for at least 50 years."

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Rainy River on a point of order.

Mr Wildman: Mr Speaker, I'm not from Rainy River, but I'm glad you recognized me.

The point of order is that this is a very important speech and I hope members of the assembly would participate and listen to my colleague. I would hope that you would check to see if there is a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker: My apology to the member for Algoma.

Is there a quorum?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: I continue with a quotation from the professor. He says: "It is prominently referred to in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Its status as a basic human right was reaffirmed in the covenants of the United Nations adopted in 1960. It was referred to as a fundamental democratic right in the constitution of the International Labour Organization, the UN agency that

deals with labour matters. It recently received additional reaffirmation and support in the Vienna Declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights, signed by representatives of over 170 countries in 1993. Not least, it is embedded in Canada's national Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

He read this bill. He's horrified. I'm assuming that people of this calibre read these things very carefully and know what they're talking about. We were as horrified, when you introduced this bill, as fine people like Professor Adams in this regard. He argues, as so many others do, that the pros and cons of workfare and the strategies of unions to oppose it are irrelevant to this issue.

Most of you confound it by talking about that, but he says: "The pros and cons of workfare and the strategies of unions to oppose it are irrelevant to this issue." We argue that what you have done is unconstitutional. Something is embedded in Canada's national Charter of Rights and Freedoms and you are walking and trampling all over those rights, basic, fundamental rights that people have fought for 15 years. I urge everybody listening to oppose this government and oppose Bill 22, and call us if you want to get involved.

1750

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Klees: The member for Fort York made a number of comments. I have to respond to his desire for facts. Here are some:

The fact of the matter is that more than a quarter of a million fewer people are on welfare today in this province than on the day we were elected, in 1995.

Here's another fact for the member: There are more than 260,000 people in this province involved in the Ontario Works program today.

Here's another fact for the member: Every municipality in Ontario today has a business plan to implement this program at various stages, and I can tell you progressively more and more people are leaving the welfare rolls as a result of the Ontario Works program.

I want to also say to the speaker as a last fact for his consideration that this bill before the House today is not something the government chose to bring forward. We are bringing this bill forward in response to threats from organizations, from unions across this province, that if we continued with the Ontario Works program they would unionize those people involved in the voluntary community participation program.

We are not prepared to allow unions to move in, destroy this program and charge union fees to people on welfare. We are not prepared to have organizations, whether they be unions or of any other stripe, interfere with what is hope for the future for people in this province. This bill will bring freedom to the many people who are dependent today on welfare.

Mr Agostino: I will briefly comment on the comments made by my colleagues for Fort York and York-Mackenzie. First of all, I want to congratulate the member for Fort York for his eloquence and how clearly and com-

passionately he unmasked some of the agenda of the Tory government.

He explained very clearly how you write bills based on public opinion polls and simply put titles on bills based on what the pollsters and your focus groups tell you the bill should read like, without any real reference to the content. He explained very clearly the trickery involved in this, and the fact that you continue to take away the rights of Ontarians. In this case you take away the rights of people who are on welfare and who you've forced on to workfare. You have again abused people, you've again exploited people. I would congratulate my colleague for those comments.

I was interested in the facts from the member for York-Mackenzie. He talked about the 250,000 fewer people. He failed to tell us how many of those individuals you have forced off because you've cut the ceiling level, how many of those individuals you've forced off because you've changed the eligibility if they're working part-time, how many of those individuals you've forced off because you've put them on to OSAP. You continue this shell game you play. You take great credit for that.

I'm always amazed, and my colleague mentioned it earlier, that you take credit for 260,000 on Ontario Works, the workfare program. I challenge you, the next time you're up don't tell me 260,000; tell me the number of people who are on the program additional to those who were on before you brought in workfare. All you've done, as I've told you before, is that you've taken a program, for example, called Helping Hands in Hamilton, that may have had 200 people, and you've put that under something called Ontario Works, so now you think that's a workfare program. That is bogus; that is phoney. Frankly, you know that is a shell game that you're playing. If you want to be sincere about the numbers, parliamentary assistant, tell us how many new people you've moved on to workfare. Don't play this little game; use real numbers.

Mr Wildman: I listened carefully to my friend from Fort York. That's why I wanted others to hear his comments, particularly members of the gallery, who I know always report accurately what happens in this place, especially when a question is asked one day and then asked by another party the next day and there's a story in the paper as a result.

I would also point out, though, that my friend from Fort York pointed out that what is proposed in this bill is a flagrant attack on the basic civil rights that we take for granted as people who live in a democracy. One of the basic rights we all enjoy is the right to freedom of association, the right to join groups freely if we so choose. This bill would limit that right for people who are "participants in workfare." This bill says that such participants in workfare cannot join labour unions. They cannot join a union.

This is a basic human right. If this bill were to say, for instance, that participants in workfare cannot talk about labour issues, all of us would be aghast, because that would be limiting another basic right: freedom of speech. But no, it doesn't limit freedom of speech, it just limits

freedom of association. How on earth does a government that purports to be democratic support such a proposal? If this bill said participants in workfare cannot join the Catholic Church or the Anglican Church, we would be aghast. But no, it just says they can't join a union.

Mr Hastings: Listening to some of the comments opposite makes me go back to the comments by Steve Parr, who did an interview recently on CKCO radio in Kitchener. He asked one of the participants in the workfare program — his first name is Frank — what it had been like to be on welfare for so long. He said, "Frank...found a job after nearly five years on welfare. It may have saved his life." That's what Steve Parr quotes him as saying. Then Frank directly says: "One year pass and you don't find a job. Another year pass, you feel down. Like I had many time...I thought I can kill myself. I don't want to live like this any more."

What could be more eloquent from a participant who had been on welfare for that length of time, who was always seeking a job? Yet the member for Hamilton East goes about denigrating people who make an attempt to get off that welfare dependency.

Mr Agostino: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask the member not to cast aspersions. There was no denigrating of anybody, and I would ask him to withdraw that comment.

The Acting Speaker: I think it's a matter of opinion. I don't see anything the matter with it.

Mr Hastings: Thank you very much, Speaker. I guess the most important thing —

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. The member for Fort York has two minutes to respond.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Please, a little bit of order. I only have two minutes. Please, Speaker. I've got two minutes and I'm going to do my best to use them.

The member for York-Mackenzie talked about facts. The real facts are the following: Homelessness in our streets, not just in Toronto but everywhere, has grown; hostels have grown in terms of the number of people wanting to be in them; tenants have been thrown out of their buildings, many of them, and joined the ranks of those on the streets; poverty has increased under their regime. These are the facts about this Conservative regime. I want to tell you, please, for those of you who are watching, do not be beguiled by the member for York-Mackenzie when he says, "This bill is about freedom." Please don't be beguiled by such language. It is utter nonsense. This title, "An Act to Prevent Unionization," is unequivocal. There's no confusion about its title. They're saying that people who are working in this plan will be prevented from joining a union. It's very unequivocal.

When members talk about these other issues, they befuddle the whole bill, Bill 22. Remember this. The pros and cons of workfare and the strategies of unions to oppose it are irrelevant to this issue. This bill is deleterious to those individuals and it is an assault on the fundamental building blocks of a democratic society, one we have enjoyed for years. Principles that have been supported for 50 years are about to be eroded and certainly attacked and whacked by this Conservative government, and we want people to fight them.

The Acting Speaker: It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock next Monday.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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Monday 1 June 1998

Lundi 1^{er} juin 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 June 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1^{er} juin 1998

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent of the House for permission to wear the purple ribbon today in commemoration of the second anniversary of the death of Theresa Vince.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Agreed? Agreed.

Mrs McLeod: On a further point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm also wondering if I could have unanimous consent of the House for all three parties to make statements in commemoration of the second anniversary of the death of Theresa Vince.

The Speaker: Agreed? No.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I rise today on the first day of Seniors' Month in Ontario to raise an issue of importance to all members of this Legislature. Elder abuse is on the rise in Ontario. According to a study recently released by the Toronto family service association, our seniors are increasingly subjected to abuse by their family, friends and caregivers in the form of physical and psychological abuse, as well as financial abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

We Liberals have long been saying that the consequence of hospital cutbacks, lack of nursing home beds and shortage of community-based supports is an increased burden being placed on the average family. When seniors are discharged from hospital quicker and sicker with no long-term-care beds available to them and limited home care services, families, many of whom are already struggling to cope, have no choice but to take them in.

If this option is not available, senior couples are often left to fend for themselves with minimal supports. It has been found that abuse by a partner is also becoming more prevalent among senior couples, and that older women are more frequently the victims.

The other unfortunate reality in today's Ontario is that the abused women's support services that had been established across the province have been threatened by government cutbacks to shelter and support services.

I call on this government to recognize how its policies are exacerbating, not easing, the pressures faced by the

families and caregivers. Hospital cuts, bed shortages, nurse layoffs and insufficient funds for home care are not the answer. Improved health services and adequate funding for community-based supports are.

KIDNEY DIALYSIS

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): We're all familiar with the Kidney Foundation of Canada and we respect the hard work they do, the advocacy they perform and the assistance they provide to sufferers of kidney disease and public education.

The Niagara district chapter has not inappropriately pointed out the looming crisis over Niagara region when it comes to dialysis services. We know that Hotel Dieu Hospital is scheduled for possible shutdown by this government — I know what it talks about; it talks about the merger of St Catharines General and Hotel Dieu, but what that means at the end of the day is that one or the other is going to be gone.

Hotel Dieu is at capacity when it comes to dialysis treatment. I've been through their unit several times. It's outstanding work and a whole lot of commitment by a whole lot of qualified, trained, competent staff. Unfortunately, because it's at capacity, Niagara residents have had to travel out of the region to Stoney Creek and beyond to receive dialysis services at, among other places, private operators' private clinics. The problem is that those are at capacity now as well.

There's nobody left to pick up the excess demand that's being generated in Niagara region. Niagara region is special because it has an aging population. We know from the profile of sufferers of kidney disease and demand for dialysis that it's older generations that require it.

I agree there is a crisis looming in Niagara. This government has abandoned public health care, and very specifically seniors and sufferers of kidney disease in Niagara region and across this province.

BRENNAN HOUSE

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): Traditionally every June a group of Hamilton lawyers make bicycle trips around a Great Lake to raise money for charity. Once again, the Biking Barristers this year are taking to the road in support of the Good Shepherd Centre's Brennan House.

This year, Dennis Reardon and Terry Shaughnessy are joined by David Sherman in their quest to help children.

The Miles for Smiles campaign has in past years cycled around Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, and from Quebec City to Hamilton in order to boost awareness of this worthy cause. In 1998, the campaign is being generously supported by Guinness Imports, Slainte Irish Pub and Rheem Canada as the Biking Barristers ride around Ireland from June 19 to June 29 in search of Father Brennan's roots.

Brennan House is a service dedicated to homeless children, some of whom are in conflict with the law or are otherwise estranged from their families for a variety of unfortunate reasons. The goal of Brennan House is to assist these children to thrive and achieve an independent lifestyle. While some invariably fall through the cracks of society, for others Brennan House is an indispensable part of their road to success.

I wish to recognize the Biking Barristers — Dennis Reardon, Terry Shaughnessy and David Sherman — and the Slainte Irish Pub in Hamilton for their substantial contributions to children in need in Hamilton and area.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): Today is the day that the Ontario disability support program comes into effect. The ODSP is a program that has met with some approval from the disabled community and has by and large received qualified support in this House. However, throughout the hearings into Bill 142 and from activists in the community we have heard indications about problems that we can expect to encounter.

It is clear from a reading of the regulations, which were only released publicly yesterday, that the government is continuing its campaign to restrict access to essential services to the most needy by making them jump through loopholes to meet eligibility requirements. Whether persons with disabilities are better off under the new program is something we have yet to see. The devil remains in the details.

Recently, the Ontario Dental Association stepped into the debate by publicizing its concern about the government's new dental policy for the disabled. In its drive to reduce costs, the government is now moving away from a strategy of prevention to a system that restricts access to dental care for the most vulnerable. Pre-authorization will now be required that will see people having to wait for treatment while an administrator with no dental credentials decides over a period of days whether an emergency exists that warrants treatment.

Other arbitrary restrictions on services are going to further compromise the special needs of children and people with disabilities. Problems like these mean that our attention to the human costs —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Statements.

BANK MERGERS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Last week, the member for Dovercourt and I joined our friend NDP MP

Lorne Nystrom, who was on a tour decrying the bank merger mania that has taken hold in this country. We have tremendous concerns about this merger and I wanted to speak to it.

Canada's Big Six banks control 72%, or \$700 billion, of all deposit-taking financial assets in the country and 70% of the investment brokerage industry, all but one of the large trust companies and a majority of deposits, consumer credit, small business and mortgage lending.

We're talking about billions of dollars that are going to be in the hands of a very few people who, I can tell you, are not going to spread that kind of generosity around. I can guarantee the bank presidents are going to earn big bucks. The bank tellers, however, are going to be the lowest paid women in this financial sector. That I can guarantee you will be the result of the bank merger.

We urge the people of Ontario to fight these bank mergers and we want to try to convince the federal government to do several things. First of all, allow consumer intervention in bank practices; establish a membership-funded, broadly based financial consumer organization; ensure that the boards of directors have better representation; and urge the federal government to institute a community reinvestment act so as to finance the public —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. The member for Quinte.

1340

RECYCLING IN HASTINGS

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to congratulate the Centre and South Hastings Waste Service Board for their achievement in reducing the amount of waste per person per year sent to landfill.

For their efforts, the Centre and South Hastings Waste Service Board was recently awarded a gold award for their municipality waste reductions by the Recycling Council of Ontario. This honour is given to communities that send fewer than 150 kilograms of waste per person per year to landfill. I am very proud to say that the recycling program in my riding has reduced annual waste to 126.79 kilograms per person.

The award was presented in Toronto on April 23 to general manager Rick Clow. Mr Clow said, "The board has to give a lot of credit to the people of centre and south Hastings. We wouldn't have won this award without their considerable participation in the Blue Box 2000, backyard composting and household hazardous waste collection programs."

I want to congratulate Mr Clow and the employees of the Centre and South Hastings Waste Service Board and to echo my thanks to the residents of centre and south Hastings and the riding of Quinte, who continue to make our community a model for others in the field of waste management.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): A press conference was held today to recognize the second anniversary of the death of Theresa Vince. Theresa Vince was murdered by her employer following at least 18 months of sexual harassment in her workplace.

Jackie Carr, Theresa Vince's daughter, was at the press conference and she described the stress and the misery of her mother's life in the year and a half before her death. You could feel the anguish of a daughter in knowing that her mother's complaints had been ignored and that if she had just been taken seriously, her life might have been saved.

In Chatham, this first week in June is Sexual Harassment Week, ordered by the inquest into Theresa Vince's death. But remembering her death will not be enough to prevent this from happening again. Jackie Carr said clearly that her mother's death should teach us that sexual harassment belongs on the continuum of sexual violence. Why, then, has the Harris government refused two years in a row to make this first week of June Sexual Harassment Week across the province? Why, when the government joined with the Human Rights Commission to launch a public awareness campaign to fight sexual harassment, did they not see fit to involve the front-line rape crisis centres in the campaign? And why was there not enough funding for this initiative to run a television campaign? This government has spent \$3.5 million on its education propaganda campaign alone, but they couldn't find the money for a significant campaign against sexual harassment.

I wonder, does another woman have to die like Theresa Vince before sexual harassment will be taken seriously? Surely it is not just in Chatham that we should remember and learn from Theresa Vince's death.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): It's with pleasure and pride that I rise today and acknowledge that today is Injured Workers Day. Along with my colleague from Dovercourt and our leader, Howard Hampton, we marched today with the demonstrators from the front of the Legislature over to Hart House Theatre, where we saw the first showing of a new documentary called *Myths at Work*, which outlines exactly this government's continuing attack on injured workers.

We know that under Bill 99, which took effect January 1 of this year, this government has cut by 5% the amount of net income that injured workers receive if they're hurt on the job. We know that you also cut by 5% the premiums your corporate friends pay into the WCB. In fact, you've changed the name itself: You've taken out the word "workers" and you've taken out the word "compensation." It cost you a million dollars just to make that name change, the same million dollars that you cut by eliminating the Occupational Disease Panel, a world-renowned panel that identified the linkages between expo-

sures in the workplace and illnesses and fatal accidents that injured workers face. You killed that for the \$1 million so that you could change the name and lay the groundwork to bring in a privatized insurance scheme for injured workers.

Injured workers were here today because they're not going to forget in the elections coming up.

IRISH PEACE ACCORD

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): Periodically on the world stage an event occurs which places the spotlight on the true value of the democratic principles we too often take for granted in this great province and in this House. Democracy is a principle which was born and defended with the lifeblood of millions of men, women and children throughout the world.

On May 22, 1998, a momentous historical event occurred in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The democratic process was used to bring an end to a civil war which had been raging for over three decades, which had resulted in the deaths of thousands and the wounding and maiming of countless others.

The historic vote on Friday, May 22, broke voter turnout records in Northern Ireland, with a turnout of over 81% and over 71% of them voting in favour of peace. In Ireland, an overwhelming majority of 94.4% of the voters backed the peace accord.

This peace initiative is a joyous occasion for tens of thousands of Ontarians of Irish descent who have lived in the constant fear that the lives of their families were in danger in the war zones.

I am sure every member in this House joins me in sending our congratulations and our warmest wishes to the courageous leaders of Ireland, Northern Ireland and the British government who worked so diligently to bring about this exciting new Irish peace accord.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Statements by the ministry? Sorry, any motions?

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding standing order 95(d), Mr Agostino and Mr Colle exchange places in the order of precedence for private members' public business, and that, notwithstanding standing order 95(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item 14.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding standing order 9(c), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm on June 1, 2 and 3, 1998, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

MEMBER'S PRIVILEGE

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): Mr Speaker, in compliance with the standing orders, I provided you with written notice of this earlier today. It's my understanding that is the appropriate procedure when a member feels that he or she has been somehow impeded in their duties as a member of the Legislature.

On Wednesday, May 27, 1998, I asked the Minister of Natural Resources, the Honourable John Snobelen, a question that goes to the heart of the events surrounding the death of Mr Dudley George at Ipperwash Provincial Park in 1995. The minister referred that question to the Attorney General. The following day, in what can only be described as a premeditated attack on my character, the member for Lambton asked the Honourable John Snobelen a question about the same matter that I had asked the previous day. This time the minister chose to answer the question and he and the member used the opportunity to attack my character. The minister said in the preplanned attack that my question "had the effect of inadvertently misleading the House," "must have been extremely poorly researched," "our research would find no basis in some of the substantive parts of the question." The member for Lambton said, "The member for Scarborough Agincourt is reckless with the truth."

In my opinion, this was a deliberate plan by at least two government members to impede my ability to do my duty of raising legitimate questions about the Ipperwash affair.

To further support my case, I would like to present evidence supporting my belief it was a planned and unfair attack on me.

First, I have reviewed my question in Hansard for May 27 and I stand by every word in my question.

Second, the minister implied that the letter I referred to was some obscure letter written in 1937 that the ministry had some difficulty finding. In fact, the letter and the correspondence around it is absolutely central to the Ipperwash affair.

Exhibit 1, which I have provided to you, Mr Speaker, and will provide to the House, is a memorandum from the Attorney General's ministry from October 1996, when the government dropped 43 Ipperwash-related charges against the first nation.

I draw your attention to the fifth paragraph, which has to do with the same correspondence I was talking about. It says:

"The crown has confirmed the existence of correspondence made in 1937 between the federal Indian Affairs

branch and the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests which refers to 'the old Indian cemetery, which...is located within the territory now being developed as a park' (referring to what is now Ipperwash Provincial Park). This documentation gives objective support for the reasonableness and the honesty of the accused's belief.

"Further, it has been clearly indicated by the Provincial Division judges at pre-trials that this defence will succeed in all instances when it is raised," the defence that there was evidence of a burial ground.

"Accordingly, this 'colour of right' defence is of sufficient significance that the crown concludes that there is no reasonable prospect of conviction. The crown therefore must withdraw all forcible detainer charges."

1350

The third point I want to raise, Mr Speaker, is that Mr Snobelen said "the member for Scarborough-Agincourt...who indicated that there were some recent developments." I said no such thing. I did quote from the letter, which said, "When cleaning out the park recently, the engineer discovered an old Indian burial ground." That's from the correspondence in 1937.

The fourth point I raise is Mr Snobelen said: "This," the letter, "came to the attention of the provincial government in 1995, when the Liberal Minister of Native Affairs federally, Mr Irwin, shared it with the media. That's how it came to our attention." That's what Mr Snobelen said.

Exhibit 2, which I have provided you, shows that in fact as soon as the federal officials found the correspondence, they notified the province of its content even before they briefed the federal minister, and this is provincial evidence. This exhibit also shows that the Attorney General, Mr Harnick, discussed the matter with federal Minister Irwin a day before the federal government made a public statement. That's exhibit 2.

Further, as exhibit 3 shows, the provincial government acknowledges receiving the correspondence in 1937. It was the provincial government that was to take the action.

As you can see, Mr Speaker, this is a very serious matter. For the first time in over 100 years a first nations person is dead as a result of a land claim dispute. I ask you to review this matter of principle, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): On the same point of privilege, member for Beaches-Woodbine.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I would like to add our words of support to the request for you to review this matter. I strongly believe that the actions we saw unfold in the House last week were a breach of the member's privilege and that he raises important points. I would like to add to his information some disturbing news I have just been made aware of which I think is a further breach of rights and privileges of members of this House.

You will be aware, in the standing orders, Mr Speaker, of a provision under section 124 which allows for a

question to be referred to a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly for their review of up to 12 hours. Under that provision, members of the New Democratic Party caucus, members on the administration of justice committee and particularly the member for Welland-Thorold, have given notice that we would wish to proceed with a review of the Ipperwash matter at the administration of justice committee.

It has just recently been drawn to my attention that the government has chosen to refer Bill 15, a budget bill, to the administration of justice committee —

The Speaker: I am not going to say you're out of order, but I think it's a different point of order. What I'd like to do is tell the member for Scarborough-Agincourt that I will take his point of privilege under advisement and report back, and I will take yours as a different point of order. Member for Beaches-Woodbine.

Ms Lankin: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. If I may simply continue from that point, we have been made aware that the government has referred Bill 15, a budget bill, to the administration of justice committee. As you will well know, it would have been the normal expectation of members of this Legislative Assembly that the budget bill be referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

I read from the standing orders, the section that sets out the roles of committees, "Standing committee on finance and economic affairs which is empowered to consider and report to the House its observations, opinions and recommendations on the fiscal and economic policies of the province and to which all related documents shall be deemed to have been referred immediately when the said documents are tabled."

Bill 15 is a budget bill and deals with the third phase of the government's tax cut, which is indeed a fiscal and economic policy on the part of the government, and I think it is reasonable to have expected it would have been referred to the finance and economic affairs committee.

My contention is that the government, in continuing to stonewall members of this Legislative Assembly from seeking information and full review and full disclosure on the matters involved in the Ipperwash events and the death of Dudley George, has purposely blocked the hearing of the section 124 request on the Ipperwash inquiry at the committee on administration of justice.

You will know that the committee is not allowed to proceed with any section 124 request if there is government business before that committee, and it is our contention that the matter of Bill 15 has been purposely referred to that committee to once again stonewall any attempt on the part of members of this Legislative Assembly from having disclosure on the matters related to Ipperwash.

We believe this is a breach of the privilege of the members and of their rights under the standing orders, particularly with respect to 124, and that it shows further disdain on the part of the government for the members of the Legislative Assembly and for our attempts to have full disclosure on the Ipperwash issue.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, with regard to the first point of order raised by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt —

The Speaker: I've dealt with that.

Hon Mr Sterling: I also dealt with it last week and I just want to reiterate my remarks —

The Speaker: Government House leader, I looked to you just to make comments on it. You said you weren't. So it's dealt with. I'm going to receive it. Perhaps you would deal with the one before us now.

Hon Mr Sterling: Fine.

Mr Speaker, an order to send Bill 15 to the committee on administration of justice is neither unprecedented nor out of order. It's not uncommon for bills to be sent to alternative committees in this Legislature. During the third session of our last Parliament, municipal affairs and housing had four bills. They were sent to four different committees as follows: Bill 61, the Toronto Islands Residential Community Stewardship Act, went to the general government committee; Bill 94, the Metropolitan Toronto Reassessment Statute Law Act, went to the social development committee; Bill 163, the Planning and Municipal Statute Law Amendment Act, went to the administration of justice committee; Bill 198, the Municipal and Liquor Licensing Statute Law Amendment Act, went to the finance committee.

Time allocation motions suspend the general orders of the House and therefore their contents cannot be disputed where they contravene the general rules and practices. As you stated in your ruling of December 2, 1997: "Time allocation motions suspend the standing orders of the House. They suspend them, so whatever rules we have lived by up until this point in time, they're suspended, and inserted in their place is the time allocation order."

Sending Bill 15 to the committee on administration of justice is neither unprecedented nor out of order.

The Speaker: Frankly, I don't see it as being out of order; in fact I think it is in order. There are a million I could think of from the top of my head, examples I can cite where —

Interjection: Name them.

The Speaker: I can't name a million maybe, but certainly hundreds where you could cite examples of where committees were asked to take on certain responsibilities that may have been properly before other committees. There's no real point of order there.

Ms Lankin: Just one further point.

The Speaker: I'll certainly hear another point of order, but on the face of it I'll tell you now that there doesn't appear to be a point of order.

Ms Lankin: Thank you. Perhaps, Mr Speaker, there is one additional point I should have made in my original presentation to you, and that is that I think in the majority of these precedents you are citing — I don't have them in front of me so I'm unable to confirm that it is in all cases — the reason bills are referred to other committees is that the normal committee that would be the appropriate committee to hear that is busy with other government business.

In this case it is obvious that the committee is not busy with another bill. The finance committee is free to hear that.

I would just ask if it is possible for there to be a check of the precedents when matters have been referred to other committees to see if in fact the pattern is such that it is because the obvious committee was busy with another bill at that time.

1400

The Speaker: I appreciate the point you're making, but really the matter is immaterial. The reasons are immaterial. What it comes down to is, do they have the power to do this? If the answer is yes, then it's academic why they're doing it, and I don't even want to begin to get into the heads of the government who decided to do this because there are a million reasons why they could do it — I won't name every one of those either. The fact is that they're allowed to do it, it is properly before the House and it's within the rules that we operate by. Therefore it's in order and why they do it is immaterial.

I think I had the member for Essex South.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent for the Minister without Portfolio responsible for seniors to make a statement and then for us to reply, in that this is the first day of Seniors' Month in Ontario.

The Speaker: I don't know the rules. He's not here. Is that proper? How can he make a statement if he's not here? We haven't even got to ministry statements yet. He may be giving a statement.

Mr Crozier: Speaker, you had called for ministry statements and then the point of privilege was raised.

The Speaker: That's right. Before motions. I went back to motions. Having said that, he's here now. Why don't I just get it out of the way early? Is there unanimous consent for the minister to make a statement on Seniors' Month? Agreed?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): No.

The Speaker: No.

Hon Mr Jackson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I appreciate you recognized me. I just want to calm down the members opposite. Our office notified the two opposition critics that tomorrow we'd be making the formal —

The Speaker: This is not a point of order.

Ministry statements.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I understand that the member for Fort William, prior to my entering the House, asked for unanimous consent to make a statement to mark the second anniversary of the death of —

The Speaker: You're going over old ground.

Ms Churley: I'd like to ask again.

The Speaker: With great respect, that has been put. The fact is, it has been put for unanimous consent and it was refused.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I think it is incumbent upon me to introduce the new pages. I wish to welcome the 15th group of pages to serve in this 36th Parliament:

Michael Bos, Nepean; Sean Broda, Don Mills; Anthony Carricato, Sault Ste Marie; Nancy Dang-Vuu, Chatham-Kent; Laura Duke, Mississauga North; Jeremiah Groen, York Centre; Brett Hodgins, Simcoe East; Jackie Hougham, Durham-York; Adrienne Johnson, Scarborough East; Sharleigh Laing, Sarnia; Mary Elizabeth Murray, Brant-Haldimand; Loretta Norton, St Catharines-Brock; Jesse Rissin-Rosenfeld, High Park-Swansea; Laura Robson, Lanark-Renfrew; Jennifer Skinner, Markham; Richard Southern, Oriole; Matthew Trevisan, York-Mackenzie; Racquel Uy Lim, Scarborough-Agincourt; Lee Webb, Middlesex; Drew Wicks, Northumberland; and Adam Wilson, Ottawa South.

Welcome, and I hope you enjoy your stay.

1400

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. I am concerned about what I believe could be, if the facts as alleged are true, one of the worst incidents of conflicts of interest that this House has had to contend with in a long, long time. Can you confirm that Michael French, an individual under contract with the Ontario government to run the competition for the new Niagara casino, was, at the same time, working on a \$100,000 casino contract with the eventual winner? Can you confirm that this is in fact what happened and can you tell us when your government became aware of this conflict of interest and what you have done about it?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): As the Leader of the Opposition knows, the OCC has advised me that basically the same process was in place for the Windsor process. In fact I have a letter from the Ontario Casino Corp that talks about their process and what due diligence they have conducted around that.

The allegation that you make specifically, that was mentioned in the Toronto Star article, I believe, on Saturday, is a new allegation to me. The first time I saw it was on Saturday. A formal process was in place for all parties to declare potential conflicts of interest. I've asked the Ontario Casino Corp and their lawyers to check their records to see if this is true and if there was disclosure or if there was not disclosure. If anything improper has occurred, I can assure the House that we will look into it and see what steps to take next to remedy the situation.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, this is a very, very serious issue. This appeared in the Toronto Star on Saturday. It is unacceptable for you not to have an answer available in this Legislature today. If it was really important, you would have had that information and you would have had that answer available today. I think it's in both the greater public interest, as well as in your interest, that we have an inquiry into this matter to determine whether or not these facts as alleged are true. It appears, according to a story in the newspaper this weekend, that there was a certain gentleman who was involved in a conflict of interest here. You can rectify this. You can remedy this. You can address this in the most responsible way by agreeing to have a public inquiry. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The Leader of the Opposition tries to let on that you can do government just by snapping your fingers. When we were made aware of this allegation — I've informed you that I saw it for the first time on Saturday. This morning we called the Ontario Casino Corp, as I just explained to you. We've asked that the Ontario Casino Corp and their lawyers give a report back to us to determine (a) whether it is true, and (b) what the process was and what action should happen. I've given you the assurance that if there was anything improper done, we will take the proper action.

Mr McGuinty: This issue has been on the front burner here for quite some time now. You have said throughout that there was nothing to these allegations, that they were spurious in nature, that it was an invention on the part of the opposition party. How many more of these facts do you need to float to the surface before you agree to have a public inquiry? The people of this province are now beginning to pay more and more attention to this issue. It's on your plate. We have an allegation here of a serious conflict-of-interest charge. Why don't you agree right now, because you've got nothing to hide, to hold a public inquiry that will start effective tomorrow in this Legislature so we can all get to the bottom of this?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As the Leader of the Opposition knows full well, until last Saturday all we had were innuendo and accusations, and for all I know that still could be the case with this latest allegation.

What I have done is asked the Ontario Casino Corp, which, as you know, is at arm's length from the government and conducted this process — they had a selection process. They had a review committee. They've had checks and balances in place to avoid any potential conflict of interest. What I've asked them to do, with their lawyers, is to determine if this allegation is true, and if it is true, then I've assured the House that we will take the appropriate action if there has been any impropriety occurring.

But your solution to everything is to have a public inquiry. You've asked for them about 88 times and in 13 different allegations. Let's do this the right way, and that is to ask the question to the Ontario Casino Corp: "Is it true, and did it violate any of the procedures you had in place to protect the process and protect the taxpayers of this province?"

TUITION FEES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is for the Minister of Health. You will know that your colleague the Minister of Education has decided to deregulate tuition fees for Ontario's medical schools. Over the next two years, students will be facing tuition of somewhere between \$10,000 and \$11,000 a year for medical school. The Ontario Medical Association estimates that students leaving home to pursue medical school studies will face debt loads of up to \$80,000 and as high as \$100,000.

We already know, and you know this more so than anybody else in this Legislature, that many patients today in Ontario don't have access to doctors in this province. There are too few doctors. We also know that because of demographics with an aging and growing population, the demand for physicians in Ontario will only increase. So this issue is not simply one of accessibility to medical schools; it's one about our continuing ability to deliver quality health care to Ontarians.

My question, Minister: Do you agree with your colleague's decision to deregulate tuition fees for our medical schools, knowing what it's going to mean for health care in Ontario?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Mr Speaker, through you, to the Minister of Education and Training.

1410

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): It is indeed the situation that we need to ensure we have the proper students coming through our universities to achieve training, to ensure that health care in Ontario continues to improve.

Through the recent flexibility we've given our universities, many of which are not exercising that authority in the first year — U of T, for example, and Queens will not be introducing any fees in their first year — we are following what other provinces have done. For example, Nova Scotia: The leader of the opposition may know that in Nova Scotia the Liberal government has had tuition fees for medical residents for a number of years. Saskatchewan is another province.

Our expectation is that since they are both students as well as assisting in the system, the universities will be very responsive in terms of charging —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, every single medical school in the province is increasing its tuition fees for its medical students, and some plan to go as high as \$11,000, such as the University of Toronto medical school right across the street here.

What the Minister of Health has failed to do is to recognize that this is an issue that is connected with our ability to deliver quality health care in the province. There are over 70 communities right now in Ontario that are experiencing doctor shortages. We've got to encourage students to get into medicine, and especially, knowing that students who graduate from medical school who come

from underserved areas are more likely to return to those areas, we've got to make sure we can encourage students from underserved areas to get into medical school. The problem is that in underserved areas there are no medical schools. That means that when they come to the University of Toronto, they are looking at \$20,000 every year to pursue medical school studies.

Once again, why are you making it more difficult for us to ensure we have a generous supply of doctors in Ontario when there is a growing need?

Hon David Johnson: Indeed we do need to ensure that all areas of Ontario are properly served by doctors. That's why this government, through the Ministry of Health, has taken initiatives in the past to encourage that there would be an adequate supply in rural areas and distant areas. Is that job finished? Can we guarantee at this exact moment in time that we have doctors in each and every rural area? No, we can't, but this government — the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education — has taken initiatives to ensure.

In terms of tuition fees, we also need to ensure a high quality of program through our universities. We are giving universities the flexibility, along with funding we've given to the universities, to ensure they have the resources to have a high-quality program such that our undergraduate students and our students in the medical field are well trained.

Mr McGuinty: The minister has got it right: It is an issue of funding and the problem is you're cutting funding to our colleges and universities. That's the issue. Now you're expecting our students to pick up the slack you've created.

It's already a very real challenge for doctors in Ontario to practise medicine. Many of them are looking south of the border longingly. A number of students who are graduating from our family practice areas in this province are looking to go to the south. There is already a real challenge before our doctors in the province today. It's already hard enough for them to get on with their jobs. Now what you are doing, effectively, is making it more difficult for us to attract young people into the practice of medicine in Ontario. Do you understand the connection? This is more than accessibility now to post-secondary studies; this is going to have a serious, negative impact on our ability to deliver quality health care in Ontario. If you understood that, why don't you agree not to allow universities to proceed with the deregulation of their fees?

Hon David Johnson: The reason is simple: It's because there's more than one issue that needs to be satisfied. There's the issue of quality. We need to ensure that the students at university, whether they're in the medical programs, whether they're in any other type of program, have access to quality programs. We have insisted — the first government which has ever taken this course of action — that where tuitions are increased, the post-secondary institution must identify a quality improvement in terms of the actual program or in terms of the facilities in which the students learn.

This government has taken action in terms of supporting doctors, encouraging them to set up practices in rural areas and underserved areas in Ontario, and we are taking action at our post-secondary institutions to ensure a high-quality program for students coming through into the medical field.

ABORTION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): To the Minister of Health, during the time I had the privilege of holding the portfolio of Minister of Health, the tragic bombing of the Morgentaler clinic took place. I held a press conference the following day to announce that we would move immediately to re-establish the clinic, that we would not allow women's access to legal abortion services to be eroded in any way.

Last month, a different bomb was dropped, not one of physical destruction but one that equally erodes women's access to abortion services. St Michael's Hospital, in taking over Wellesley, as a result of your hospital restructuring, announced that they would no longer be performing abortion services. That's 1,000 to 1,500 abortion procedures per year that will no longer be available to this community. You said nothing, Minister. The silence is deafening. Will you stand today and make it clear, very clear, for the women of this province that the Mike Harris government will protect our right to choose, that you will protect our right of access to legal abortion services and that you will not allow any erosion of service-access levels as a result of your hospital restructuring?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): All of the physicians who performed the abortion procedures had their privileges transferred to another hospital. That has taken place and is in the course of taking place.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Let's be clear: Women in this community had access to a full range of reproductive and sexual health services at the Wellesley Hospital. Now they no longer have guaranteed access because St Mike's has taken over Wellesley as the result of hospital restructuring. Women whose doctors had hospital privileges at Wellesley have had those transferred to St Michael's. If they wish to have a procedure like a tubal ligation, they have no assurance they're going to be able to have that procedure. Why should anyone other than a woman and her doctor have anything to say about whether a tubal ligation is allowed or not? St Mike's is saying you have to go through the same committee process that was deemed to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. A woman who experienced a broken condom or, God forbid, is raped no longer has access to the morning-after pill because St Mike's won't allow it. Minister, I'm asking you directly today, will you take action to ensure that women's reproductive and sexual health services are reinstated at Wellesley?

Hon Mrs Witmer: All patients who require any of the specialized procedures or any of the specialized treatments are going to be accommodated elsewhere. It may not be at

St Mike's, but certainly all of the physicians had an opportunity to determine where they would provide those services and they will be provided at other hospitals within the city of Toronto.

1420

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Minister, this is totally unacceptable. Surely you're not saying that women are going to have to take to the streets yet again to protect the hard-won right to choose and to have access to safe, legal reproductive and sexual health services in our communities. That's the point here, and it's not just the Wellesley-St Mike's community; right across the province there's a concern that as hospital restructuring continues, there is no policy framework or direction from you to ensure that these service levels are protected no matter what happens with hospital mergers or service realignment.

In your mail today there is a letter from a Carol asking you to ensure that access to these services is not lost. The letter also asks that you "immediately put in place a policy directive that will ensure your hospital restructuring commission decisions cannot result in the loss of these critically important women's health services."

You have taken such actions to protect rural health care. Minister, will you tell us today that you will do the same for women's health?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As the restructuring takes place, we have made sure that any of the specialized procedures that relate to any group of people can continue to be provided at other hospitals within Ontario. Those services, that access, will still be there. They may not be in the hospital, because it's being closed, but those services will still be provided to the patients in Ontario. In fact, when it comes to women's health, we are actually in the process of setting up a women's health council to ensure that the needs of women in this province will be reflected and the appropriate treatments can be provided.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I just want to take this opportunity to introduce, in the members' gallery, a member in the last Parliament, Dr Frankford. Welcome.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Chair of Management Board and it's a question we've been asking for over a week now: the very clear appearance of conflict of interest in your casino selection process and the impropriety that surrounds it.

Every day there is new information about the Falls Management casino consortium. We know already that all kinds of top advisers to the Conservative Party are involved and have been involved in that bid. Prominent Conservatives like David McFadden and George Boddington were involved in lobbying your government, first of all on setting up casinos, and are now part of the

Falls Management casino consortium. In fact, they're going to benefit from what they lobbied for.

We know that the Falls Management casino consortium is owned in part by the Latner family. The family gave your party \$48,000 before the last election.

Minister, the whole deal stinks of conflict of interest. When are you going to come clean and call a public inquiry so that people can be assured —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): As I told the leader of the third party last week — his critics were asking me the same question — the Ontario Casino Corp has advised me that they've used a similar process to the one set up under your government, basically the same as in Windsor. You have a selection team, you have a group of advisers and you have a review panel.

They've written a letter to me stating that the process is fair, and independent of any influence of any kind. They've also said that the decision that Falls Management best met all the selection criteria was unanimous. There has been no contract assigned as yet because we've been in the process of negotiations. They also talked in their letter to me about the checks and balances around the conflict of interest.

The information that came forward last week in this House is innuendo and accusation. I pointed out at the time that this family that you seem to want to make innuendoes about did a great deal of business with your government when you were in power. I don't know where you would be on that, but when it comes to facts, I can tell you that this government will be open and transparent and will try to check these things out.

Mr Hampton: The fact is that any casino selection process used in the past didn't have a Conservative fundraiser chairing the selection committee and didn't have Conservative lobbyists on both sides of the process lobbying for a casino and then joining the consortium that gets the casino. That's the difference, Minister. Open your eyes. It's evident to everyone else.

I want to ask you about a further detail. I want to ask you about the Conservative Party's Patti Starr, Leslie Noble. We know that Leslie Noble lobbied and advised the Premier to move full scale into legalized gambling. We also know that her brother, Bill Noble, now works for Gaming Venture Group, a company owned by the Latners, which has received one of the contracts to build a permanent charity casino.

Minister, how many connections do we have to draw? How many connections do we have to draw between Conservative advisers lobbying your government on the one hand and then getting the deal on the other? By the way, that company is also controlled by the Latners. What are you going to do about this?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The leader of the third party's questions are along the same nature as the ones I answered all last week. This was an arm's-length independent process. The Ontario Casino Corp advised me of the selection

panel, they had a review team. It's basically the same process that you had set up. As to your allegations about influencing the Premier, I know nothing about that.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you can devise any process you want. The trouble is, if you've got your Conservative advisers sitting on the decision-making process and the same Conservative advisers benefit from the process, it's conflict of interest, and that's as plain as day.

But I want to raise another name. This concerns Michael French. It would appear that at the same time Michael French was working for your government he was working for a business group that was lobbying your government and he was also working for another group that was running the Niagara selection process. Even Donald Trump says there is something fishy here, there's something smelly here. We also know that early on Michael French assumed a major role in deciding who would get the contract in Niagara Falls.

Is this what you mean by opening up Ontario for business: Contribute to the Conservative Party and get awarded a contract? Is this the kind of message you want to send out about how Ontario does business?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I mentioned earlier to the leader of the third party, the Ontario Casino Corp advised me that they had basically the same process that was in place when your party was in power to do Windsor.

As I answered earlier today to an earlier question, the allegation around Coopers and Lybrand is a new allegation to me. A formal process was in place for all parties to declare a potential conflict. I've asked the Ontario Casino Corp and their lawyers to check their records, and I can assure the House that if anything improper has occurred, we will take the proper action.

1430

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, you tell us on behalf of your government that you are firmly committed to obtaining full and fair compensation for all hepatitis C victims. I don't want to ask you about compensation today. I want to ask you about access to treatment.

Today I met with three hep C victims who wanted you to know that while compensation is important to them, they are even more concerned about their access to medical treatment. They told me it can take anywhere from six to eight months to get approval for the drugs that they need, and I'm sure you will agree that that is not acceptable.

You've cut red tape for business. Why won't you cut red tape for hep C victims so that they can get early access to the drugs they need?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): To the Leader of the Opposition, yes, I see here, according to your press release, that you indeed have met with this group of individuals. As you know, I had the opportunity

to meet with some of the representatives of the group last week myself. In fact, I've had a letter subsequently from this group and I think you'll be pleased to know that we actually have reduced the time period required to get access to drugs. I think in here it makes reference to six months. That can now be done in about three weeks.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): Minister, your government said it is committed to helping all victims of hepatitis C. You said the real issue is not one of dollars but one of compassion and humanity. People are suffering right now. They need access to drugs, access to treatment, yet so far you have refused it. I am asking for three simple things: recognize hepatitis C as a disability; cut the red tape to allow victims of hepatitis C access to the drugs they need; and set up a registry to identify hepatitis C victims.

Today in the gallery are Trisha Beadle, Susan McGuire and Janice Pillon. They know that these are things you can do right now. Will you give them your guarantee today that you will do these things?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I said in my response to the Leader of the Opposition, I have met with representatives of the hepatitis C group. In fact, I want to stress again that today our government is represented at a meeting in Edmonton where we have indicated that we would like to extend a financial assistance package to those individuals who did get hepatitis C prior to 1986.

I know that as of today we have actually said to the federal government and we have said to the other people at that table that they must take off the table for discussion the status quo, and that is that no financial assistance would be provided. We are doing this despite the fact that we have yet to hear from the federal government as to what their position is regarding any assistance for any of these individuals who received hepatitis C prior to 1986.

In response to your question, again I would indicate to you that we have already been responding to concerns —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question, leader of the third party.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have another question for the Chair of Management Board. I wonder if the Chair of Management Board can tell me about a company called Comcare. We know that your government is privatizing health care; we know you're closing hospitals and you're turning more and more health care over to private, for-profit companies. That's where Comcare comes in. We've discovered that Comcare is owned by Dynacare, and Dynacare is owned by the Latner family, a very generous contributor to your government.

What we've also discovered is that since you've now decided to privatize home care, Comcare, a Latner company, has come up with new contracts in Lanark county, Perth, Smiths Falls, Brockville and Sarnia. So here's the list: The Latner family is involved in the Niagara casino, the charity casinos, the Dynacare medical labs, Greenwin

Properties, which benefits from your changes to rent control, and now Comcare, which benefits from your privatization of home care.

Minister, if you have nothing to hide, why don't you call a public inquiry so we can get to the bottom of all your connections to the Latner family?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Mr Speaker, I'll refer this to the Minister of Health.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): If the leader of the third party were to carefully take a look at the number of companies that were privatized and the number that were non-profit that were providing community care service support when they were in office, he would see that the numbers were about the same as they are today. I think it's also important to remember that we have 43 CCACs in this province. Those are community care access centres.

There are boards that support the CCACs. They are locally elected and nominated individuals. What you are doing is casting aspersions on the process that those boards — local representatives — are making, the choices they're making regarding the services that are going to be provided in the community service area. I think it's unfortunate that you would cast aspersions on the people who are making those choices.

Mr Hampton: Let me help the Minister of Health out here. You've put in a rule that says that those CCAC boards always have to take the lowest bidder, that they always have to deal with whoever happens to bid the lowest in a particular area, regardless of quality of care.

My question to you is —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: My question to you is, it certainly bothers other people in this province when they see the Latner family contributing large sums of money to your government; they see you change the medical lab policy to benefit a Latner family company; we see you turn your casino selection process inside and out to benefit one of their companies; we see the connections with the charities selection and one of their companies. Now we're also seeing it with the privatization of home care.

Minister, take the profit out of health care. Take the profit out of your campaign contributors' pockets. Will you hold a public inquiry into how your government is awarding these contracts and the apparent conflict of interest that is everywhere?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would simply respond by saying those are some very serious allegations that are being made. I personally don't know the family in question, but I can say to you that it was your government that realized there were systemic problems associated with Ontario's public and private sector lab system. It was your government that first issued some formal recommendations on changes that should be made to the laboratory system. It was your government that brought in the industry cap on

lab billings. It was your government that recognized that lab billing could not go unchecked.

It was also your government, as well as the Liberal government, who have been dealing with the Ontario Association of Medical Laboratories, and it was that association that has been giving governments support and advice and input. It was that association that early last year indicated the consideration of a corporate cap. That cap —

The Speaker: New question.

AMATEUR SPORT

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. As the House is aware, I think everyone knows, my kids are involved in minor hockey and minor ball in Huron county, and I am very concerned about sports in Ontario.

There has been quite a bit of excitement and interest, understandably so, of late related to the Toronto Olympic bid. As all honourable members will know, the Canadian Olympic Association approved Toronto's proposal to become the Canadian candidate city for the 2008 Olympic Games back in April. The Premier was part of the team that made the successful presentation to the Canadian Olympic Association.

In my area of southwestern Ontario, there is a great deal of excitement about the London Alliance Canada Summer Games. Can the minister give us an indication of what role the province has in making these games a success?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): First of all, thank you for the question, because I want to point out that the Premier's leadership in making the bid in Calgary for the Olympic Games in 2008 opens the door to all sorts of possibilities for job creation all across the province, as well as economic development in general, as well as probably leaving us a legacy of sports facilities at the end of it.

Those same assets will be transferred to the London Alliance games, because in 2001 we are going to have in southwestern Ontario the tremendous summer games. Jobs will be created, there will be a legacy probably left of the facilities that will be built, and the province in general, but particularly southwestern Ontario, will be greatly enhanced economically, as well as putting it on the map.

1440

Our government has put in, and the Honourable Minister Dianne Cunningham gave on the part of me and for the province —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary. Thank you. We'll go for the supplementary.

Mrs Johns: As my supplementary, concerns were highlighted about safe and harassment-free sports at the Canadian Hockey Association meeting in Quebec City in the last few weeks. Dealing strongly and effectively on this sort of matter is a priority for my family and families that participate in sports all over Ontario.

What is your ministry doing to bring awareness to this matter and how is the government showing leadership in this area of safe, secure activities for our youth?

Hon Ms Bassett: First of all, this is an area of prime concern for our government and I thank the Canadian Hockey Association for highlighting it at this time.

The ministry is working through the provincial sports organizations to send out the message that we will absolutely have zero tolerance on sexual harassment in sports. We are working with our partners and we want to develop further partnerships to make sure that we get this message out. To do this we are distributing a video called Good Sports Don't Hurt, Harassment Does. We are producing a guide to assist Ontario's sports administrators in screening applicants for paid and volunteer positions, and that's in the process right now. We're providing the provincial sports organizations with resources such as model policies, videos and training materials to deal with sexual harassment and policy development.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Today doctors from around the province visited with the three parties in the Legislature and told us that they've come to ask for quality care because it's been taken away in this province. One of the reasons is the slashing and cutting you've done to this province's hospitals. Your funding cuts are directly responsible for lowering the standard of care: longer waiting lists and elective surgery being cancelled.

The Ontario Hospital Association said to you two weeks ago that the situation is getting worse, that the deficits at hospitals this year could be as high as \$506 million. The banks may not even be willing to finance the money that hospitals need.

Minister, will you, in front of the doctors who have come today to see whether there is any leadership at Queen's Park, promise to admit your mistake, put funds back into hospitals in this province and ensure we can have the quality health care services for the patients that doctors want to give to them?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I'm not sure if you're indicating that doctors have asked you to make that plea or not. I had an opportunity myself today to meet with the doctors.

Certainly I want to emphasize the fact that we have had a committee set up with the physicians called the Physician Services Committee. It is a committee that moves together to ensure we can provide high-quality patient services to people in this province. There has been a commitment made by the Ministry of Health to work with health care providers such as physicians to ensure that we can provide high-quality health services. We also continue to meet with the Ontario Hospital Association, and as I have said before, when there are situations in hospitals that require attention and require the additional resources, as you know, we are making a response. Part of that re-

sponse was to make an additional \$225 million available to respond —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Kennedy: Why would you have to be asked by doctors to ask the question? They want the question to be asked on behalf of their patients.

Minister, they know the question has to be put because this year, when you were faced with an emergency room crisis, you waited 10 weeks to even announce a response. What your deputy minister did was send a memo, and I have it here, around to hospitals reminding them that they should be cancelling elective surgery to compensate for your lack of dollars and to make sure people weren't sleeping overnight day after day in emergency room hallways.

I want to cite one case in a Scarborough hospital of a woman who miscarried, who tried to have the foetus removed not once but twice. She was going to be turned away until we intervened to have it happen. Elective surgeries have been cancelled all over this province to accommodate your random slashing. It's on behalf of patients like that that I ask you, will you put adequate funds back into hospitals to ensure patients can be properly treated?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Unfortunately, there is sometimes great liberty taken with some of the facts, so let's make one thing clear.

Dr Dennis Psutka in the Globe and Mail, February 4, 1998, made it clear that: "Overflowing hospital emergency rooms are nothing new and should not be attributed to health care restructuring."

The reality is that our government was the first one to courageously take action to respond to emergency room overcrowding. With the Ontario Hospital Association we set up a task force. The task force was composed of representatives from —

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): Speaking of liberties with the truth.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Renfrew North, you must withdraw that comment.

Mr Conway: I'm happy to withdraw it if the minister withdraws the same phrase.

The Speaker: The first thing is to withdraw it.

Mr Conway: I will happily withdraw if the minister —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister, I didn't hear it but you have your choice to withdraw it or not.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I said "liberty with the facts."

The Speaker: Frankly, I see it as the same thing so I would ask you to withdraw it.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'd be happy to if it pleases you.

The Speaker: It's got nothing to do with pleasing me; it's just a matter of withdrawing it.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I withdraw.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister of Tourism, come to order. I don't want to have a debate about it. I see it as the same thing, so it's academic at this point what you think. Minister.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'm happy to withdraw that.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Continuing with the discussion around the emergency room, our government was the very first government to actually respond to the problems that had been there for 10 to 15 years. There was a task force that was set up and the task force made a report. They reported in the morning, and by the afternoon our government responded by indicating that we were prepared to invest \$225 million in order to provide for an interim 1,700 long-term-care beds; money into home care services so that patients could be released from hospitals and get the support; money into hospitals so they could open additional hospital beds when there was overcrowding; and money to support critical care and emergency room nurses.

One more point: We are investing this year in hospitals \$7.8 billion, and this is an increase of \$534 million. We're spending more on health than ever in the history of this province.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) : Ma question est au procureur général. Comme vous le savez, dernièrement je vous ai posé une question dans cette Assemblée traitant de la Loi 108. J'ai produit une opinion juridique du Conseil législatif de l'Ontario qui dit que vous ne protégez pas les services juridiques en français qui sont transférés aux municipalités. Vous avez nié cette opinion juridique en disant que votre amendement donnait garantie législative aux francophones vis-à-vis leurs services en français. J'ai ici deux opinions juridiques : la première de Racicot Maisonneuve Labelle et Cooper, écrite par M. Labelle, et la deuxième de Genest Murray DesBrisay Lamek de Toronto, écrite par M. Paul Rouleau, qui disent que votre amendement ne protège pas les services en français. Combien d'opinions juridiques est-ce que ça vous prend, Monsieur le Procureur général, pour admettre que votre amendement ne protège pas les droits des francophones en Ontario ?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): In the context of Bill 108, I can only point out what a number of groups I've been dealing with have indicated about our proposal to deal with French-language rights in Bill 108. ACFO has told us, and it's quite encouraging to note, that linguistic rights and basic principles of law will be preserved when Ontario municipalities are transferred the responsibility for lawsuits and some provincial infractions.

They go on to say, "Now, with the proposed modification to Bill 108, municipalities will have to respect certain principles concerning the administration of justice. This modification protects the linguistic rights included in the transfer. ACFO is very pleased. We say kudos to the Ontario government and we thank AJEFO."

The association of francophone municipalities has this to say: "The revisions discussed and agreed to by all participants on April 21 will further reassure those who

may not have been convinced of the commitment of the government to linguistic rights.... The board of directors and member municipalities urge the Ontario government and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to proceed as soon as possible with third reading of Bill 108 within the new session."

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The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Supplementary.

M. Bisson : Monsieur le Procureur général, c'est clair : toutes les opinions juridiques qui ont été données disent que vous ne protégez pas les droits des francophones. C'est clair. C'est soit (a) que vous êtes complètement incompétent, et vous êtes incapable d'écrire un amendement qui protège des services juridiques francophones, ou (b) que vous savez parfaitement bien que votre amendement ne protège pas les services juridiques pour francophones, et vous faites de la politique avec nos droits, sachant que des gens de votre caucus qui sont proches du Parti réformiste veulent éroder les services des francophones. Quelle est votre réponse ? Est-elle (a) que vous êtes incompétent, ou (b) que vous êtes en train de nous passer un sapin ?

Hon Mr Harnick: Let me tell you what the francophone jurists have told me. They say:

"This is a compromise which, in my opinion, benefits all parties. The government ensures respect for the basic principles of justice and for language rights by municipalities interested in signing an agreement with the Attorney General. The Franco-Ontarian community will benefit from the fact that in Ontario, language rights are associated with statutory and common law rights.

"I would like to thank you for the successful result we have achieved. By protecting existing language rights in this way as part of the transfer to Ontario municipalities of prosecution responsibilities with respect to certain provincial offences and certain federal contraventions, you are the first government to clearly specify the right to a French-speaking municipal prosecutor. I am also pleased that the wording used will ensure the delivery of counter services in French....

"Finally, I would like to thank you for your personal intervention in this matter and for your suggestions which allowed us to protect language rights, which are so important to our Canadian identity. I am very happy that we were able to work together to amend this bill in so positive a manner."

That's what the association of francophone jurists says. Certainly they are satisfied, and the method that we've used extends French services in a way that they never did when they were the government.

DRIVERS' LICENCES

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, the issue of graduated licensing has been highlighted in the media recently and is a concern to the people in my constituency.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Cochrane South, come to order.

Mr Ford: It was designed to cut down on the risks that new drivers face. As I understand it, before 1994, new drivers of all ages were three times more likely to be involved in a serious or fatal crash than experienced drivers. Also, collisions were the leading cause of death for people between the ages of 16 and 24 years. Minister, can you tell this House and my constituents what our new drivers must do to obtain driving privileges?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): I thank the member for Etobicoke-Humber for the question. It is true that graduated licensing was introduced in 1994. Indeed the member for York Mills was lobbying for a full two years before that for this very worthwhile program.

Under the GLS, all new drivers will have at least 20 months' driving experience and have passed two driver exams prior to becoming fully licensed. In the G1, or first stage of the licensing process, new drivers must be accompanied by a licensed driver with four years' driving experience, have a zero blood alcohol level, refrain from driving between midnight and 5 am, have a seatbelt for all backseat passengers and are prohibited from driving on 400-series highways and other high-speed highways.

To pass the G2 stage, drivers must pass the basic road test. New drivers will remain in G2 for 12 months and continue to build on their driving knowledge. These new drivers must also have a zero blood alcohol level and must have a seatbelt for every person in the car. I'm pleased to say that death, injuries and collisions among novice drivers have declined significantly since the introduction of graduated licensing.

Mr Ford: Minister, I know my constituents will be glad to hear that graduated licensing has been working. However, could you please provide me with some more details on the interim evaluation of graduated licenses? How much safer are our new drivers?

Hon Mr Clement: The statistics, which are very exciting for those who are concerned about safety, are a matter of public record. I can tell the honourable member that the overall collision rate for novice drivers under GLS has improved by 31%; fatality and injury collision rates are down by 24%. The collision rate for novice drivers between the ages of 20 and 24 saw a dramatic decrease, with a 38% decrease in collisions for male drivers and a 49% decrease in collisions involving female drivers.

The benefits, if I can make this final comment, for GLS means that there are safer roads for all drivers. It also means 900 fewer visits to emergency rooms, 2,000 fewer days in the hospital for collision victims, 800 fewer ambulance calls and 13,000 fewer hours of police time required to investigate collisions. I believe that this is an important fact for Ontario. I thank the honourable member for the question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Health. In view of the comments made earlier by my colleague from York South in regard to the cuts and deficits the hospitals are facing, we've added to the crisis in Hamilton-Wentworth with an extensive backlog in the area of orthopaedic surgery. Some doctors I've spoken to in the Hamilton area report waiting lists of up to three years for joint replacement surgery, up to 400 individuals on those waiting lists. Dr Frank Smith, a prominent Hamilton physician, says, "We're now reaching the point that we're not able to cope with the enormous burden."

We're talking about senior citizens here. We're talking about individuals to whom access to surgery makes a difference between being confined to their homes or being able to function fully and properly in the community. Minister, I ask you, in view of the difficulties we're facing, will you today commit to increased funding for hospitals in the Hamilton area to clear up the backlog and ease the burden of many of the senior citizens who are waiting for the surgery?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): One of the reasons we're reforming our health care system is so that we can address the needs of the aging population. The aging population requires a greater expenditure of health care dollars, and we have identified the fact that there are some priority areas that need our attention and we have been reinvesting dollars. Priority areas are cardiac care, cancer care, hip and knee replacement, and of course dialysis.

We have been making announcements over the past couple of years. We have reinvested a total of \$3 billion. We will continue to ensure that those priority services are there for the individuals who need them and we will endeavour to reduce those waiting lists to the greatest degree possible.

Mr Agostino: The problem becomes that you continue to make announcements — Minister Wilson made announcements, you have made announcements — but the money is not flowing. It is not reaching the level where patients are going to benefit from this. Very clearly, you can understand that a three-year waiting list for surgery for a 70- or 75-year-old senior citizen who is confined to a bed or to a home is unacceptable anywhere in this country, particularly in Ontario.

Minister, the announcements sound good. The feel-good press releases help. The reality at the end of the day is that seniors and people who are waiting for surgery are not benefiting because the money is not flowing and the cuts that have been made are far too deep.

I saw an individual in my office on Friday who has been waiting in excruciating pain for six months. She must take painkillers every four hours, every single day, because of the pain. It's been three months and she is still to get a date for this type of surgery. You can understand the impact.

Specifically, can you tell me how much money will be allocated to Hamilton-area hospitals to clear up the backlog in orthopaedic surgery, and when will that money start flowing?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I can appreciate the situation that people in this province face when they require hip and knee surgery. It is for that reason that recently, when I made the most recent announcement concerning additional money for hip and knee surgery, we set up a patient registry system in order that all future reinvestments could be directed and targeted to the areas of Ontario where individuals are most in need of this surgery and where we can reduce the waiting list to the greatest degree possible.

This registry was greeted with tremendous support from the surgeons who are involved in this type of surgery and from the physicians, so I hope that we can address the concerns of those individuals you speak about.

1500

TIRE RECYCLING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. Last March with great fanfare you stated that the tires buried in Egremont township would be removed and recycled when the weather got better. As of 11:30 this morning, you still had not lived up to this promise. But what is worse is that your ministry has indicated, and I have a letter here stating this, "that the groundwater is severely contaminated with carcinogenic substances and that the aquifer may become contaminated."

Minister, it sounds like you may be removing the tires, but you're leaving the toxic sludge and toxic water. When removing the tires, they're going to dig a pit next to the tire site, draining the water into the new pit, removing the tires and then putting the toxic water back into the original pit, with the hope that these contaminants will break down naturally.

We're talking about toxic sludge and toxic water here. Will you commit today to remove the toxic water and the toxic sludge before the aquifer is contaminated?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I am taking the advice of my technicians and my scientists with regard to the treatment of this particular matter. They have assured me that whatever method they choose will take care of the problem that is there, a problem which incidentally was created because a previous minister wouldn't take some aggressive action with regard to the removal of these tires. That happened in the last administration.

Ms Churley: Minister, you are aware that that was an urgent situation and that was a recommendation from the local area at the time. We're talking about the present situation. It is your responsibility to clean it up.

I want to talk to you about a resurgence of tire fires in Ontario in general. Many people are suggesting that this is a direct result of a lack of enforcement by your ministry, most particularly due to the massive cuts you've made. But there are many of these ticking time bombs across the

province. The residents of Brantford know this all too well. I'm sure you're familiar with the Otterwood Tire site in Brantford. There was a fire at this site last December. There are well in excess of 5,000 tires on the site. The owner does not even have a certificate of approval, nor has he applied for one. The first order against the company was given on October 15, 1997.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Ms Churley: Minister, they are out of compliance. When are you going to accept responsibility for the tire sites across the province and bring in legislation to deal —

The Speaker: Thank you, member for Riverdale. Minister.

Hon Mr Sterling: The collection of tires and the problems related to that have long been ongoing in this province. We are at the present time looking at various options to deal with this long-festering problem.

With regard to individual sites, I understand there are significant problems in Brantford. My ministry issued an order last December but ran into some difficulties with regard to that. I am, however, attempting to deal with this in a more generic manner so that we will have the powers and the laws and the regulations behind us in order to deal with these in a more aggressive manner.

I'm amazed that the previous government and governments before this time have not given environmental officers the tools they need in order to enforce the laws we have in place.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Sterling: My hope is that this Legislature, with the help of the opposition parties, will give our environmental officers the necessary tools to deal with people who are collecting tires illegally and not taking care of —

The Speaker: New question. Member for Durham-York.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. I read a report describing a resolution coming from the recent NDP convention. It indicated the need to end funding cuts imposed on programs to combat violence against women.

Minister, you were in my riding recently when we presented funds to a local coalition of women's groups. Help me with this. Could you please clarify for my constituents and the members of this House the degree to which this government is committed to combating violence against women?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): It seems that a lot of people must have seen that resolution at the NDP convention, but the fact of the matter is — and I think that the NDP caucus here at Queen's Park understands because they've been working with us in many regards to make this a priority for the government — we actually do spend more money. We spend more than the \$100 million that was there when we first became the government.

But I think the most important part of that is that we're focusing on delivery of programs and so there has been a rearrangement of the money to put it into front-line programs as opposed to administration, some 30 programs across nine ministries. In addition to the \$100 million, we of course are spending \$27 million over the next five years.

We appreciate the assistance that we've had from over 500 groups and individuals who let us know where their priorities were, and this is definitely a priority for our government, as it was for governments previous to us. We're spending more money on violence against women in Ontario.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas we are concerned about the quality of health care in Ontario;

"Whereas we do not believe health care should be for sale;

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is taking steps to allow profit-driven companies to provide health care services in Ontario;

"Whereas we won't stand for profits over people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not privatize our health care services."

I add my signature to this petition.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): This afternoon I had the chance to attend an event organized and supported by injured workers, together with my leader and the member for Hamilton Centre, and I have this petition to present.

"Whereas the Harris Conservative government's Bill 99 has cut benefits and stripped rights from injured workers; and

"Whereas the government's new deadline for appeals of WCB cases threatens to deprive thousands of injured workers of any opportunity for justice; and

"Whereas injured workers and their supporters have set aside June 1 of each year to rally support for the cause of justice for injured workers; and

"Whereas this cause of justice will not be achieved until Bill 99 is repealed;

"Therefore, we call on the Legislature of Ontario to repeal Bill 99, restore fair benefits and a fair appeal system and undertake a complete reform of the system to finally achieve justice for injured workers."

I've affixed my signature to that as well.

ABORTION

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

I present this petition on behalf of 700 of my constituents.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I've got a petition here that reads like this, and it is directed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Premier of Ontario has committed the government of Ontario to enacting an Ontarians with Disabilities Act during the current term of office;

"Whereas the expiry of the government of Ontario's current term of office is fast approaching;

"Whereas the Premier of Ontario has further committed the government of Ontario to working with members of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, among others, to develop such legislation;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has unanimously passed a resolution that it keep its promise to enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act during the current term of office and that the government of Ontario work with members of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, among others, to develop such legislation; and

"Whereas the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, of which Bloorview MacMillan Centre is a supporting member, has provided to the government of Ontario the document A Blueprint for a Strong and Effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which contains many examples of barriers experienced by people, including children and young adults, with disabilities; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario committed in its 1998 budget address to supporting people with disabilities through a variety of measures, including the creation of an Ontarians with Disabilities Act;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, of Bloorview MacMillan Centre, a family-centred rehabilitation facility serving Ontario's children and youth with disabilities and

special needs and their families, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately act on its commitment to enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act during the current term of office and, in doing so, include effective means to eliminate barriers experienced by children and young adults with disabilities and special needs and their families, and also to involve the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, among others, including children and young adults with disabilities and special needs and their families, in developing such legislation."

I will affix my signature in full agreement with this petition.

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PROTECTION OF HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by many people from Grey and Bruce counties.

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas the health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly which I'd like to read.

"Whereas the Minister of Education intends on taking more than \$1 billion out of Ontario's education system at

a time when there is an increasing consensus on the importance of supporting our schools and classrooms; and

"Whereas per pupil funding in the province of Ontario now ranks below other jurisdictions such as Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri and Nebraska; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has now embarked on an advertising campaign which will cost the taxpayers of Ontario over \$1 million; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris commercial doesn't constitute an important public announcement and instead is clearly an abuse of public funds, because they are self-serving political messages which are designed to influence public opinion; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government could cancel the advertising campaign and use the \$1 million which belongs to the taxpayers of Ontario for the purchase of 40,000 textbooks;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Mike Harris government to cancel their blatantly partisan, self-serving political advertising campaign and redirect the taxpayers' \$1 million to classroom funding."

I concur with the content of the petition and I will affix my name to it.

ABORTION

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

I am happy to sign this petition.

NURSES' BILL OF RIGHTS

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads:

"Whereas nursing is key to quality health care; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to provide high-quality care; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to be heard and consulted on health care issues; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to be recognized and treated as equals in the health care system; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to have meaningful participation in all aspects of health care reform; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to be advocates for their communities and the people they care for without fear of reprisal; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to work in settings that are free from harassment and discrimination and that nurture learning, diversity, personal growth, job satisfaction and mutual support; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to work in conditions that promote and foster professionalism and teamwork; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to deliver care in an integrated, publicly funded, not-for-profit health care system that is grounded in the principles of the Canada Health Act;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour, promote and respect the nurses' bill of rights as outlined above and to ensure that these rights are enshrined in all aspects of health care."

I have attached my name to that petition.

HOME CARE

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I have a petition of 1,127 signatures collected by Lorraine Fines from the town of Orangeville. It's addressed to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas sufficient new funds have not been allocated from the province to provide the quality and quantity of services offered by the community care access centre of Wellington-Dufferin, thereby resulting in a change to the eligibility criteria and the decision by the CCAC not to include homemaking services to the disabled, frail and elderly as an insured service, and decreasing the amount of support and relief services available for relatives and others who provide care for an individual at home;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"Increase the funds allocated for health care in Wellington-Dufferin in order for the community care access centre to support individuals to remain in their home by reinstating homemaking services to the disabled, frail and elderly; reinstating caregiver support in the form of respite services back to 60 hours per month as provided by the former home care agency."

I have placed my signature on this document.

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition here about a matter which really concerns Ontarians, and that's the fact that the rules have been reformed so there's less debate about a very important matter. I'll just read this petition:

"Whereas the people of Ontario want rigorous discussion on legislation dealing with public policy issues like health care, education and care for seniors; and

"Whereas many people in Ontario believe that the Mike Harris government is moving too quickly and recklessly, creating havoc with the provision of quality health care and quality education; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has passed new legislative rules which have eroded the ability of both the public and the media to closely scrutinize the actions of the Ontario government; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, when they were in opposition, defended the rights of the opposition and used the rules to their full advantage when they believed it was necessary to slow down the passage of controversial legislation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has now reduced the amount of time that MPPs will have to debate the important issues of the day; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government, through its rule changes, has diminished the role of elected members of the Legislative Assembly who are accountable to the people who elect them, and instead has chosen to concentrate power in the Premier's office in the hands of people who are not elected officials;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Mike Harris to withdraw his draconian rule changes and restore rules which promote rigorous debate on contentious issues and hold the government accountable to the people of Ontario."

I support this resolution and I have signed it.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I wish to present a petition signed by Catholic ratepayers from my riding.

"Whereas the provincial government is planning to make significant changes to the delivery and governance of education in this province; and

"Whereas we as parents believe that school councils should play an important role in education with clearly defined responsibilities, limited to their particular school communities; and

"Whereas we as ratepayers are extremely disturbed that consideration is being given to abolish school boards and eliminate decision-making by locally elected representatives,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the present structure of school boards within the province of Ontario continue to have a major role in governance of the schools to deal with broad policies as advocates for the students in their community, to provide cost-efficient educational services and to be directly accountable to the parents and local ratepayers."

I sign this petition.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a petition with respect to education advertising.

"Whereas the Minister of Education intends on taking more than \$1 billion out of Ontario's education system at

a time when there is an increasing consensus on the importance of supporting our schools and classrooms; and

"Whereas per pupil funding in the province of Ontario now ranks below other jurisdictions, such as Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri and Nebraska; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has now embarked on an advertising campaign which will cost the taxpayers of Ontario over \$1 million; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris commercial doesn't constitute an important public announcement and instead is clearly an abuse of public funds, because they are self-serving political messages which are designed to influence public opinion; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government could cancel the advertising campaign and use the \$1 million which belongs to the taxpayers of Ontario for the purchase of 40,000 textbooks;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Mike Harris government to cancel their blatantly partisan, self-serving political advertising campaign and redirect the taxpayers' \$1 million to classroom funding."

I'm pleased to affix my signature, along with dozens of my constituents, to this particular petition, which we think is in the best interests of the province of Ontario.

1520

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government continues to chronically underfund and cut public sector expenditures to pay for a 30% tax cut; and

"Whereas we believe these cuts have greatly reduced the ability of the public sector to deliver the quality of services all Ontarians expect in health, education, environment, law enforcement and all other services expected from a government to create a just society;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario be dissolved and a general election be called immediately."

OPPOSITION DAY

TUITION FEES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe there is unanimous consent for me to move the motion that has been tabled in the name of Mr McGuinty.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is there unanimous consent? There is unanimous consent.

Mrs McLeod: I move that:

Whereas Mike Harris is responsible for a 60% increase in tuition fees on top of the 50% increase under the previous NDP government; and

Whereas students are already graduating with \$28,000 debts; and

Whereas tuition deregulation will cause tuition fees to soar and debt loads to skyrocket; and

Whereas Mike Harris has not just raised tuition fees, he has also forced students to take on more and larger loans and has told families they will have to contribute more; and

Whereas the Mike Harris cuts to colleges and universities are the deepest of any jurisdiction in North America over the last two years; and

Whereas Mike Harris has prevented students from earning their own way by cutting back on the amount of money they can earn in a year and by cutting back on the amount of earnings they can make through summer jobs programs; and

Whereas Mike Harris student debt load levels are already too high; and

Whereas students and their families are already experiencing "sticker shock" at the high cost of these programs; and

Whereas no student in Ontario should be denied the opportunity to get a degree or diploma;

Resolved that the government listen to the students, professors and financial institutions who say that debt levels are already unmanageable; and

Resolved that the government adopt the Dalton McGuinty commitment to freeze tuition fees and halt opportunity-killing tuition deregulation; and

Resolved that the government stop forcing students into greater debt to make up for the Harris cuts to universities and colleges in Ontario.

We've chosen to focus debate today on the growing disaster of high tuition and soaring levels of student debt. There is a crisis in post-secondary education today, a crisis facing the young people who want the opportunity to go on to college and university, but who know that their families can't support them and know that getting a post-secondary education is going to mean years and years of being burdened with debt after graduation.

There are a number of facts that have led to this crisis, and I just want to underline those today.

The first fact is that under the previous New Democratic Party government there was a 50% increase in tuition and the cost to students; the student's share of the cost of an education continued to grow. It is interesting that now the New Democrats are no longer in government they appear to have gone back to believing in zero tuition, but that belief seemed to have been set aside while they were sanctioning a 50% increase in tuition as a government.

The second fact is that this Mike Harris Conservative government, which promised that a slight increase in tuition would be part of their election platform, has actually sanctioned nothing less than a 60% increase in tuition over the term of their government, a 60% increase in tuition across the board. That has meant that the student's share of the cost of education has now risen to some 35%.

In some institutions in this province, the student's share of the cost of education has reached 50%.

There once was set out in writing a Mike Harris Conservative Party belief that a fair share for students was 25% of the cost of education. But it seems that that belief has been excised from any document or they'd like to excise it from any document bearing the stamp "Common Sense Revolution" because that is one of the unkept promises that this government would like to forget about.

The third fact is that it wasn't enough for the Mike Harris government to sanction a 60% increase in tuition across all programs, undergraduate, graduate and professional; they decided they would bring in deregulation, the second province in the country to allow deregulation. Nova Scotia, the only other province that has deregulated tuition fees, has the highest tuition of any province in this country. We are second and we will soon surpass them because this government has seen fit to deregulate graduate programs and many professional programs.

What we're already seeing is that decision to deregulate, to allow institutions in these particular areas of deregulated programs to charge whatever they think the market will bear to their students, that freedom, that flexibility which the minister described as having been given to the institutions, is going to mean increases in tuition in some programs as high as 120%.

What that means is that government-owed debt, the debt owed to government, whether provincial, federal or to the university, for a student who wants to go to medical school at the University of Toronto, could well be as high as \$81,000. That does not include private debt and it doesn't include the debt which apparently those medical school students who become graduates and go into residency programs will have to incur to pay this idea of tuition on their residency programs. Amazing that the University of Toronto has decided it wants its medical residents to pay back their student loans even while they continue to pay tuition for their residency programs. The Harris government has nothing at all to say about that. They want to wash their hands of any responsibility for what colleges and universities do in these deregulated programs.

The fourth fact is that the Harris government has washed its hands of ensuring that debt loads for students remain manageable. They have allowed "the sky's the limit" increases in the deregulated programs. They've sanctioned a 60% increase in other programs. The only commitment that they require from universities and colleges in the deregulated programs is to ensure that the college or university itself lends the student more money and puts in place some kind of repayment plan to get that money back from the students when they graduate, a repayment plan which is supposedly going to be sensitive to income.

That at least is consistent with what the Harris government has always claimed was their answer to soaring tuition and increased debt, that they would put in place something called an income-contingent repayment plan so they would assure students that if you were going to have

large debts you wouldn't need to worry because you would only have to repay those debts as your income after graduation allowed it. Of course what that really means is that students will have more debt, they will pay more interest on the debt because all their government is really doing is allowing them to take longer to repay the debt if they don't have a good-paying job immediately after graduation.

That is hardly an answer for students and is certainly not a way of keeping debt manageable. But this government couldn't even get that plan off the ground because the banks that were approached to work with them on their new student assistance loan repayment plan said: "We won't participate. We won't participate because the student debt load is already too high."

In Nova Scotia, where they had an income-contingent repayment plan to deal with the high debt loads of their highest tuition in the country, the bank that was responsible for administering that has withdrawn from the program because student debt load is so high that the student was too big a risk for the banks to be a lender and to manage that loan after graduation. The bank said: "The debt was too high. We're not prepared to work with you, government, to get into your income-contingent repayment plan." The banks also said: "There are already too many lenders. It's too confusing. You can't have a good debt management plan for a student and for graduates from our colleges and universities because they owe money to the province and they owe money to the federal government."

1530

What did this government do in answer to the bank's concern? They added to the debt with deregulated tuition and they got another lender, the college or university itself, into the business of lending money. This government basically took its traditional approach. They said, "We can't solve the problem so we will just dump it on to the institutions and we will leave the burden of that debt on the students themselves."

Of course, this government did not wash its hands of any further responsibility for helping students manage reasonable debt until it had already taken a whack at the existing student assistance program. This is a government and a minister who want to brag about having a so-called new plan for student assistance. It was a part of the budget that was highlighted. But in fact there is no new Ontario government plan for student assistance. This government had the sheer gall to take the dollars that are currently in the student assistance plan in Ontario and roll them in under the umbrella of what was a welcome federal government initiative, their millennium scholarship fund. But all this government did was buy into the name of a program which was welcome. They didn't put any new money into it.

When the Minister of Education talks about 300 million new dollars into the new student assistance plan, they aren't new dollars at all. That \$300 million that the minister talks about is the same \$300 million that three months ago this government took out of the loan forgiveness plan and put into something which they now call a

grant: exactly the same money; no more assistance for students. In fact this government, in the meantime, has dismantled the student assistance program and the support that has been provided traditionally to Ontario students bit by bit.

They have raised the level to qualify for loan forgiveness or for what is now called a grant, which means more debt for students; \$1,000 more debt per year that this government sanctions before they will provide any relief for students at all, and of course that means less cost for government even though it means more debt for students. They made students dependent on their families for support for an extra year before they can get any assistance at all; again, more debt for families and less cost to government.

This government decreased the amount of money that students are allowed to earn without its affecting the assistance they can get from the Ontario student assistance plan. Again, that let the Harris government make cutbacks in student assistance funding but left students with even more debt. This government then decided it would save even more money by simply cutting part-time students out of student assistance altogether and it forced single parents on welfare to go into debt to get even a chance at a post-secondary education.

What does this mean to individuals? It means that besides the fact that there is less cost for government, less responsibility for the Mike Harris Conservatives and a lot more debt for students, many young people, many single parents, many adults who want to improve their employment possibilities by getting a post-secondary education simply won't go to college or university. It doesn't matter how much you tell them that they will be able to improve their employment possibilities and pay back their debts after graduation, people are afraid to take on debts that range from \$25,000 to \$100,000.

I just recently had a letter from a young woman who is 25 years old, a graduate of a four-year program here in Ontario, now working in a fairly low-paying job teaching in Saskatchewan and believing that she now faces personal bankruptcy because she simply can't begin to make the repayments on her Ontario student loan. She does not want to be a bad citizen, she doesn't want to be a defaulter, she doesn't want to be a bad credit risk. She wants to teach, she wants to contribute, and instead of that she has been put in a position of facing a future of debt. People will not take on that kind of risk of debt.

I was at Yorkdale Secondary School, an adult education centre, last week talking with people who are about to graduate from that program. They are devastated because these people, many of them single parents who've gone back to get their secondary school diploma in the hope that they can improve their situation through education, know that the door has been shut to them on a post-secondary education in Ontario.

Now we have deregulation, which means a two-tiering of our post-secondary education system so that some programs in some schools are going to be accessible only to those who can afford them. We are going to have a two-

tiering of our institutions, with those universities and colleges that believe they can charge higher fees and still attract students coming to be better funded than those that can't, particularly universities in more remote locations. Then we are going to have the kind of two-tiering that says we have some colleges and universities available to those who can afford the best and we are going to have other colleges and universities for the rest.

We successfully managed to confront and to avoid the two-tiering of education in this province right up until the time that this Mike Harris Progressive Conservative government — hardly progressive at all — decided it would set aside the values and goals that have always been the hallmark of Ontario education, elementary and secondary and post-secondary education, and allow the market to dictate who would have an opportunity to get that invaluable educational opportunity.

We know that colleges and universities are cash-strapped after \$400 million in cuts and after a budget that provided only a very few dollars to a very few selected programs. We know that we are 10th and last across the country in the funding of post-secondary education. But the answer is not to make up for the cuts on the backs of students. The answer is not to put signs on the doors of some of our colleges and our universities saying they are for the rich only. The answer is not to drive a generation of students deeper and deeper into debt. The answer is not to have the lowest funding and the highest tuition of any province in this country.

That is why we call on this government to listen to the students, the professors, the financial institutions, the families who say that debt levels are already unmanageable and are going to deprive their young people, students of this province, of the opportunity to pursue the college or university program of their choice; to adopt Dalton McGuinty's commitment to freeze tuition fees to stop the opportunity-killing deregulation of tuition; to stop and take time to determine what is fair and affordable as a share for students to pay for their education and to ensure that we have a student assistance plan in place to protect students from being ridden with debt for years after their graduation.

That is the purpose of our motion today, and we trust it will have the support of all members of the House who truly believe that post-secondary education is an opportunity that should be available to every qualified student.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I rise to support the resolution this afternoon because I am particularly concerned about the very serious level of student debt already in this province, considering that this province, admittedly due to cuts from all three parties when they were in government, is now the lowest on a per capita basis for funding of post-secondary education of all provinces in this country. It has gone progressively down in terms of funding. When the Liberal government was in power, Ontario was eighth in funding; under the New Democratic Party government Ontario was ninth in funding per student; and under this government, the Conservative government, we

are now 10th on a per capita basis in terms of funding post-secondary education.

How is it that we in Ontario, the richest province, the province that has between 30% and 40% of the economy of the whole country, that has a population of about 12 million people, that has enormous wealth of resources, are the last in per capita student expenditure for post-secondary education in this country? How is it that we lag behind Atlantic Canada or the Prairies?

Partly because we are so low in per capita expenditure for post-secondary education, governments of all three parties have allowed a higher percentage of the cost of each student's post-secondary education to be paid for by the student or his or her family through tuition fees.

You will know that our party has recently gone through an exercise that we have called Dialogue for Change. We have dealt with many policy areas, put out discussion papers and had grass-roots discussions with people right across the province, not just members of our own political party but also people with interests in various policy areas right across Ontario, and have come forward with proposals for policy initiatives in these areas that were recently debated at our party convention in Hamilton and were passed.

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One of those discussion papers in the policy area that I'm most concerned with was to do with education. It was entitled *Not for Sale: the Future of our Public Education*. One of the areas that is dealt with in the Dialogue for Change paper on education is post-secondary education. We had significant input from administrators, faculty, support staff, but particularly from post-secondary students, in developing our position with regard to post-secondary education. I would commend it to all members of the House.

The major concern that is uppermost in the minds of students right now — I should say not just current students but also most recent graduates — is the level of student debt. Ten years ago, the average graduate in Ontario had a debt of approximately \$7,000 on graduation with an undergraduate degree. That has now grown, depending on the particular field, to somewhere between \$17,000 and \$25,000 per graduate. With the proposals that are before us for deregulation of tuition fees and further increases in tuition, over the next 10 to 20 years we will see the average debt load per graduate in Ontario rise to somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$40,000 to \$60,000 on graduation. It's no wonder, as my friend from Fort William says, that many students are suffering sticker shock when they look at the costs, not just tuition but their accommodation, their books and all the ancillary costs that are a part of participating in a post-secondary school education. Many of them are saying, "Look, I can't afford this," or "My family can't afford it," and they're forgoing it.

This is a question of access to post-secondary education. All of us in this House must understand and believe that all students who are capable and have the initiative should have access to a post-secondary education. They should not be limited by the size of their pocketbook or by

the income of their families. Unfortunately, the changes we have seen in tuition, particularly in the last two and a half years, but even previous to that, are making it very difficult for low-income or middle-income students and their families to be able to afford a post-secondary education.

If this trend continues, and it can only continue if we deregulate tuition fees, even for graduate courses, it will have very serious detrimental effects on the ability of those students from limited or moderate means to attend post-secondary school and gain a degree and gain the education that, I think all of us believe, if they are capable and have the initiative, they should be able to enjoy.

It seems to me that a good-quality public education system is the basis of a democratic society. If we do not have a well-trained and well-educated, knowledgeable, analytical, questioning public, we cannot have a thriving democracy. While access is a very important question for the individuals themselves and for their families, it is also of major importance for all of society, not just in terms of the ability of an individual to make use of skills and gain employment that will mean higher income, that will make it possible for the individual to contribute to society and provide for themselves and their families, all of which is important, but for the very basic reason that we must have a well-qualified, well-educated public if we're to continue to have a thriving democracy in Ontario and Canada.

The resolution points to the fact that Mike Harris's cuts to colleges and universities are the deepest of any jurisdiction in North America over the last two years. That's quite true. I pointed out that in Ontario funding for universities is the lowest of all the provinces, but we're something like number 48 in terms of all the jurisdictions in North America. How does any government justify that?

On top of the increase in tuition fees we now have the deregulation of tuition fees. This is an interesting argument that has been carried on for some time. Many of the administrators of universities and colleges have said they want to have the flexibility to set their own tuition fees, frankly, because of the cuts they've faced from the province. Because they're not getting as much revenue from the provincial government, these administrators are saying that for those very popular programs, or programs that will lead to degrees that will enable those graduates to earn a very good living, they should be able to increase those fees to help balance off or make up for the losses in revenues they receive from the public purse.

I've said over the years that this is a rather interesting position for this government. This is a government that campaigned against debt. This is a government that said it did not want to saddle the next generation with the cost of carrying and paying off the public debt that was growing in this province. This is a government that squarely said it was against public debt. Yet when we look at post-secondary education, at colleges and universities, what this government has done is that through its cuts — as soon as it came into government it cut \$400 million from post-secondary education — and now with the changes in tuition fees accumulated over the last two and a half years

and the proposal now to deregulate and allow for deregulation of tuition fees, this government is replacing public debt with private debt.

The very generation that the Conservatives said they were determined to protect from having to pay off the public debt is being saddled with enormous private debt because of the changes in tuition fees.

We've come to understand now that this government, the Conservatives, are not really against debt; they're just against public debt. If they can replace it with private debt, all the better. You don't want to saddle the next generation with public debt; we saddle them with private debt to the point where if an individual graduates from university with a debt load of somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$60,000 or more, it's the same as if that individual was starting off in life with a mortgage but no house.

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The argument has been made in terms of deregulation that some programs — professional schools at the post-graduate level, for instance — will lead to graduates being able to make a very good income and that therefore they should be able to pay off more debt. For instance, suggestions have been made to increase tuition for medical school, law school or business administration, that these fees could be deregulated and essentially the institutions will be able to charge what the market can bear, so we might see tuitions of \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000 a year for some of these programs.

It also has been argued that some of these programs will cross-subsidize less popular programs. For instance, if an institution were to charge \$20,000 a year in tuition for business administration programs, somehow that would then cross-subsidize less popular programs, such as PhD programs in anthropology. Frankly, that doesn't work. It may be that a \$20,000-a-year tuition for a business administration MBA program will pay for that program itself, but it doesn't cross-subsidize other programs. That's been shown to be inadequate for paying for other less popular programs, so we can deal with that.

But what about the argument that these individuals will make a lot of money and therefore they should be able to shoulder more debt as opposed to someone taking an arts degree, for instance? Obviously physicians in our society are very well paid because all of us in our society value the very important role they play in terms of treating the sick and maintaining human health in our society. Many physicians, particularly specialists and surgeons, can make a very good income under our medicare system.

I heard an interview just yesterday on the radio with a student at the University of Toronto medical school. She was halfway through her program. She already had a debt of \$40,000 halfway through her program. This is the accumulated debt for her undergraduate program and she's now halfway through her medical school program. She has accumulated debt of \$40,000.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): How much would she make in the first year?

Mr Wildman: That's the question. I suppose if an individual goes into private practice as a physician she should be able to make a very sizeable income, but what if this individual doesn't intend to go into that kind of practice? What if this individual decides that she wants to treat the sick in the Third World? What if this individual wants to join an organization like *Médecins sans frontières*, for instance? That physician is not going to make a very sizeable income. Yet who of us could denigrate the role of physicians who choose to treat the sick in Third World countries? Who of us would denigrate the role of that organization I mentioned, *Médecins sans frontières*, in Afghanistan right now where they are attempting to get in to treat the victims of these horrendous earthquakes? If an individual joins that kind of organization, then that individual is not going to make a very large income. How is that debt going to be paid off?

Or, for that matter, what if someone is studying law? It can be argued, depending on the area of law, that the individual could make a very good income on graduation and therefore should be able to pay more tuition, because that individual then can pay off the debt afterwards. What if this individual intends to practise in an area of law that does not have particularly high remuneration? For instance, what if this individual is hoping to practise law in a storefront operation in some of the poorer areas of the inner city? Who, then, will pay off this debt? Yet can anyone argue that this kind of law practice is not beneficial in our society?

I suppose a successful corporate lawyer can make a good income. I don't pretend to be expert in this field, but it seems to me that it takes many years for someone to establish himself or herself in that kind of practice, and over those initial years of practice his or her income may not be that high. Even if the individual is not practising law in some sort of altruistic type of operation but is even in corporate law, it seems to me many junior lawyers work for major law firms for a number of years at rather modest incomes before they become the epitome of the stereotype of the wealthy lawyer.

Interjection: Bob Rae.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): Keep Bob Rae out of this.

Mr Wildman: Well, Bob Rae is a good example. Bob Rae, on graduation, practised storefront law in a working-class neighbourhood in London, England, long before he achieved the rarefied atmosphere on Bay Street.

Mr Conway: He is now listed as a federal lobbyist, as one of those cats; for Disney, no less.

Mr Wildman: He also works for the Red Cross, as I understand, on a very difficult issue that all of us hope will be resolved very soon.

What about other types of professions: accountants and so on? I don't know that these incomes are going to be at such levels, at least for the first 10 years or so after graduation, that are going to make it possible for people to pay off these kinds of debts.

As I said earlier, and as was mentioned by the member for Fort William, many of these students in senior grades

in high school looking at what they are intending to do after graduation, no matter what idealistic views they've had and held for many years about what they intend to do to try to help serve society, will look at the prices involved and the number of years they may have to take to pay off their debts and they will say, "No, I'm not going to go."

Many people would say, "Well, these people should be assisted by their parents, by their families." I think that's true. I think they should be. But not all families are able to do that. I think many families, particularly those in the middle-income or lower-income levels, are living from day to day, from one paycheque to the next, and they don't have the wherewithal to save the money we're talking about now to pay off education, particularly if we're talking about a situation where a family, a couple, needs extra income to establish a fund that will grow over the lifetime of the child until he or she enters post-secondary education. Many young couples, with all the pressures on families today, are not able to do that. More often than not, we also have people who are not in the traditional two-parent family or two-income family but we have single parents who aren't able to assist and to save money for their students' education.

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I think the deregulation of tuition fees on top of the increases we've seen is obscene. I think we should be immediately freezing tuition fees, and then we should be trying to determine, through a consultation with the federal government, the lending institutions, students, faculties and administrators in the colleges and universities the level of sharing: how much public commitment there must be to individual students' education at the post-secondary level and how much the individual herself or himself should be obligated to pay.

This may sound very radical but it's an idea I put out there. It's certainly not our policy, but it's something we should think about. At a time in our society when most people needed elementary school education, grade 8, in order to get a job and be able to provide for themselves and contribute to society, under Egerton Ryerson that elementary school education was paid for by the taxpayers. Then when we got to the point where most people needed grade 10, or what was called second form in continuation schools in those days, public funding for that level of education was accepted in our society. Then when we got to the point of my generation, when most people needed at least high school to get a job and provide for themselves and contribute to society, the taxpayers funded education to the end of secondary school.

Who of us would argue that now an individual needs at least a college diploma to be able to get a job and provide for themselves and contribute to society? Many would argue that most people would need both a college diploma and perhaps an undergraduate degree from a university. I wonder, shouldn't we now be considering whether the public, through taxation, should be funding that level of education, if it is something that is needed by the vast majority of our society in order to compete and to contribute?

On top of the changes in tuition fees and the deregulation, this government has changed the student assistance plans to a point where it has become punitive, in my view. My friend from Fort William mentioned a number of the changes under student assistance. I would just like to point to a couple.

This government, which of course cut the incomes of people on social assistance by 22% almost as soon as it gained power, then said to those individuals, often single parents who may have dropped out of school as adolescents, returned to school and now want to go to college or university to gain a diploma or a degree to enable them to provide for their families, that if they qualify for the Ontario student assistance plan, OSAP, they no longer qualify for any welfare — no social assistance at all. So not only must they fund their tuition and their books from student loans, they must also pay for their shelter, clothing and food, not only for themselves but for their children, out of student loans.

This is a government that says they want people to get out of what they call the welfare trap. If anything is trapping people on social assistance, it's that program, it's that change by this government, telling those people that if they go to college or university, they're going to have enormous debt, not only for the cost of their education but for their living day to day and for the needs of their families.

We think that students should be able to earn a modest amount and not have that netted away in terms of calculating student assistance. Certainly the contribution from the study period income should not be deleted entirely.

Also, bursaries and awards should not affect the entitlement. That's another thing this government has done. Bursaries and awards, scholarships and so on, are supposed to be programs that are put forward because of students' excellence, a reward for that. But what has this government done? This government calculates those things and subtracts the amount that the student has received from the amount they are eligible for for loans, for assistance.

A student should be able to work part-time through the year and not lose all of that in terms of assistance. Even a vehicle — some students need vehicles, particularly if they're living at home and attending university rather than living in residence, and yet this government calculates a vehicle as an asset and it's deducted from the amount that they can claim for student assistance.

The proposal for income-contingent repayment plans is not a solution. First off, the government has been talking about that for two and a half years while they've increased tuition fees and it hasn't occurred yet. Graduates in the last couple of years have got increasing debts but, on top of that, the proposals for changes to income-contingent plans that were previously suggested would extend the length of period for payback for 20 or 25 years, would compound interest to the point that debt would increase exponentially. No wonder the banks aren't interested in it. The banks can see a bad loan when they're presented with one.

What we're seeing already is a skyrocketing of bankruptcies among people who are in their late twenties and early thirties in our society. These are people who are saddled with student debt and they can't pay it off. They haven't been able to get regular work. Many of them are working on contract since graduation, one contract to the next, and they can't pay. If that's the case already with an average debt load of somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$20,000 on graduation, what it is going to be like when the average debt is \$40,000 or \$60,000? Surely this government, above all, does not want to bring about a situation where many, many people in our society believe their only way out is by declaring bankruptcy early in life. What does that mean for the rest of our society and our economy?

We must freeze tuition fees and we must then work out a reasonable approach to how we fund post-secondary education in determining how much of the cost should be paid by individuals and their families. Post-secondary education is a right, not a privilege, in our society. It is a necessity, not a luxury, in our society. It is necessary for individuals in order to provide for themselves and contribute to society, and it is a necessity for our society if we are to remain competitive in the information age and if we are to ensure that we maintain a free and democratic society.

Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot): I'm pleased to rise today in the House to respond to the statement by Mr McGuinty. When we were elected in 1995 on a platform which included reform of our province's educational system, particularly the post-secondary system which is critically important to Ontario's productivity and global competitiveness, at that time we committed to update and improve a wide variety of components of the post-secondary system. Some of these commitments include increasing accessibility to our universities and colleges, increasing the quality of Ontario's post-secondary education system and increasing the accountability of universities and colleges.

Ontario has one of the highest participation rates in post-secondary education in Canada. According to the most recent data from Statistics Canada, Ontario's full-time participation rate as a proportion of the population 18 to 24 is at 35%. This is as compared to the participation rate under the Liberal government; in 1990 the Ontario rate was only 26%, or 20% lower than it is today.

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Under our government's programs, students continue to enrol in full-time studies at colleges and universities in record numbers. Ontario's participation rate has not declined over the past year. Every year, data produced by the universities' own lobby group, the Council of Universities, show that a majority of students who apply to go to university are accepted and registered to attend.

The government's commitment to post-secondary education is considerable. Funding for post-secondary education, including grants to colleges and universities as well as provincial support for student assistance, will be \$2.9 billion in 1998-99.

The 1998 Ontario budget announced over \$600 million over the next three years in new investment in post-secondary education. This includes an additional \$29 million in annual grants phased in over three years to recognize the contribution of Ontario universities that have increased students' access to post-secondary education and enhanced job opportunities.

Furthermore, the government will invest \$150 million over the next three years to implement the access to opportunities program to enable twice as many students to enrol in computer science and high-demand engineering programs.

Funding for the Ontario student assistance program is 33% higher than in previous years. However, Ontario plans to create a new student assistance program which will be designed to meet the needs of Ontario students and to limit student debt.

The government, in partnership with the private sector, will reward excellence in graduate studies in science and technology through new graduate scholarships and \$75 million will be awarded to students over 10 years through this initiative. In addition the government, in partnership with the private sector, will provide \$75 million over 10 years for new research excellence awards to assist the province's world-class researchers to attract talented people to their research teams.

The government has also committed more than \$10 million to four projects that will enhance strategic skills, as well as another \$20 million this year for other skill partnerships. The projects in this province include Georgian College and the Industrial Research and Development Institute, a centre of expertise for automotive parts design and manufacturing technology; Conestoga College in my riding will expand its capacity in metal machining, electronic engineering technology, mechanical engineering technology and information technology; Humber College will expand the telecommunications learning institute, a partnership between the college and leading businesses in the telecommunications industry.

The government, together with the institutions, is providing more than \$600 million for new measures in post-secondary education over the next three years so that qualified students can access post-secondary education. The Ontario student opportunities trust fund, established in 1996, will assist an estimated 185,000 students over the next 10 years. In 1998-99, the Ontario student opportunity grant will provide an estimated \$300 million in grant assistance for approximately 92,000 students. The average grant will be about \$3,300, with students most in need receiving up to \$10,000.

It should be noted that the universities are not required to increase tuition fees. The decision to increase fees rests with the board of governors of each institution and any new revenue that is derived from tuition fee increases must meet certain conditions.

First, such funds must be used for improvements in the quality of educational programs. Thirty per cent must be set aside for student aid. Institutions must make public a quality educational improvement plan within 12 months

after approving a fee increase and report annually thereafter to show how the revenues were actually used.

Universities are required to ensure that adequate financial aid is available for all academically qualified students accepted into additional cost-recovery programs. For first-entry programs, additional financial assistance provided by the university must be in the form of grants, not loans. For second-level entry programs they must be combined with income-contingent repayment or remission. This is designed so that no students incur unmanageable debt loads. Universities that do not comply will have their operating grant reduced by this government.

The balance of increased revenues will be used for improvements in the quality of students' educational programs, or in the case of computer science, engineering and related college programs, to expand the number of places available to students to study in these fields. Students in engineering and computer science will benefit because with more spaces they are likely to be accepted into these programs.

These measures give flexibility to the system by allowing universities to enhance the quality of the programs while providing for more funding for student assistance. There will also be greater accountability to the university community for the use of tuition fee revenue.

In specific response to Mr McGuinty's point that students are graduating with a \$28,000 debts, I'd like to provide the accurate figures. The \$25,000 debt level quoted in various media, television and radio is a national estimate provided by Human Resource Development Canada. It does not take into account the provincial grant programs that provide students with significant debt-reduction assistance.

The average Canada and Ontario student loan debt, from the Human Resource Development office in Ottawa, for students who completed their studies in 1996-97 was \$17,181 for a four-year university student, \$11,574 for a two-year college student, and \$8,475 for a one-year private vocational student. The overall average after the payment of provincial grants to reduce students' debts was \$12,169.

Ontario will spend \$534.5 million on student support in 1998-99. That's up from \$400.7 million in 1995-96.

Ontario continues to be committed to implementing an income-contingent loan repayment program which will provide post-secondary students with flexible loan repayment terms that will be sensitive to graduates' incomes.

Mr Speaker, I believe we are splitting our time with three others.

We are working with and for the students of all of Ontario.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I'm pleased to join the debate on our opposition day motion with respect to student debt and student debt loads. By the time this government is done, university tuition will have gone up on average by 59.2%.

The member opposite just spoke dispassionately about some statistics he got from some faceless government office somewhere. We spent a few weeks this spring out

talking to young people at our campuses. I spent time particularly at the University of Windsor and at St Clair College, two very fine post-secondary institutions in my riding. We got little cards back from students on a voluntary basis. We asked them to tell us what their debt loads were and we asked them to share with us how they're going to finance their future education. It was interesting. We actually had cards back, and I say this, where students had no debt, where they didn't have any debt — very, very few. Then we had some cards back that had what appeared to be astronomically high and unbelievable figures of debt, figures that quite frankly we just took out of the equation because they didn't seem realistic. Perhaps it was a prank; perhaps it was a government supporter out trying to undermine our campaign and trying — again, as the members opposite often do here in the Legislature — to confuse the debate with false and sometimes difficult-to-understand arguments.

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Let me tell you, a lot of students responded with a lot of passion to these cards. We called it Shattered Dreams. This young woman in her first year, from Paincourt, Ontario: \$6,000 debt. Here is somebody from Kitchener, second year: \$5,000 debt. Stratford, Ontario, third year: \$20,000 in student debt. Toronto, Ontario, fifth year, in graduate work: \$46,000 in debt. Someone from Newmarket, Ontario, in the 905 belt: \$40,000 in debt. Here's one from my riding, third or fourth year: \$8,000 in debt. Someone here from Holland's Landing, Ontario: \$18,200 in their second year of university. Here's someone from Brantford: third year, \$15,000. Here's someone from my community again: a first-year student, \$13,500.

Here's one — I didn't believe this one at first. We called the student. This student: "approximately \$50,000," and then he puts next to it, "That's correct" — \$50,000. I'll say it again: \$50,000. That's his writing; that's not me.

You can hide behind your false statements and your misleading accusations and you can refuse to deal with the reality that you have increased or will increase tuition by 59.2%. Only the NDP approach that, and they don't want to talk about those five years when they raised tuition by 42% after promising not to raise tuition. They don't want to talk about all their broken commitments about public auto insurance and on the social contract. Like you, they wanted to raise tuition. We say freeze tuition. They talk about freezing it now, but they did nothing but raise it. Many of these students who wrote to me accumulated a chunk of their student debt under the NDP.

Here's a young woman, \$18,000 in two years; she stopped being eligible for OSAP, she marked on here. Here's one at \$11,000 after one year, with six years to go, and this particular student has penned in: "Think about it, Harris." Another: \$40,000 for four years of university, three of which were under the New Democrats. Another: \$39,800 and rising; that student is from Brockville. Here we go: \$4,000 in first year. That may not seem like a lot to many of you, but to a lot of young people in this province, what does that mean? It means that education will be more

inaccessible to them. That means they will be carrying a substantial debt well into the latter years of their lives.

Why? Because it was more important to you to give a tax cut that will benefit very few and make our public education system less accessible to tens of thousands of young people right across this province, people who will be good contributing members of our society, people who will add value to our economy, people who will pay taxes. Instead of giving them hope for the future, we've shattered their dreams — you've shattered their dreams. Instead of giving them a good starting point, you've undermined their ability with a huge debt at the very beginning of their young careers.

So I say to the members opposite who have spoken on behalf of the government, you can run and do what the NDP did and try to pretend you didn't do this and you can try to pretend you're a friend of education, but the people understand and will know come the next election.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I'm happy to have this opportunity to speak to this resolution. I want to get to the member for Windsor-Walkerville in a second.

It is important to have these opportunities to raise these issues, and this is indeed one of them. Listening to the member for Windsor-Walkerville, you'd think that the Liberals are as pristine as mildew in the morning, just to listen to that guy. Did you hear him? "We're not like the Tories and the NDP before them. We are so pristine. Elect us, and we won't increase fees ever again." That's the kind of talk you get from this guy.

Mr Wildman: Except in 1987.

Mr Marchese: Except in 1987-88.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Oh, come on. That's ancient history.

Mr Marchese: I realize that was a long time ago. Memory is not as elastic as we would like, but people do have an elastic memory. The member for Windsor-Walkerville is going. I want to speak to him as he leaves. Memory is elastic for some of us, and mine says that you fine Liberals in 1987-88 raised fees in good, healthy economic times. I ask you, why would you do that when you have a healthy economy?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): What about the taxes, Rosario? What did they do with taxes?

Mr Marchese: Taxes? Oh, Liberals are so pristine on the issues of taxes that they wouldn't raise taxes ever. Good God, please, not them. If you elect the Liberals, they're going to solve every problem for every little person and big person in Ontario.

Hon Mr Harnick: Rosario, what about spending?

Mr Marchese: Spending? Please, that's another matter, but let me try to fit it in if I can. I love the Liberals.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Only one member has the floor, and that's the member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: I appreciate your support, Speaker. I've got to tell you, when the member for Windsor-Walkerville speaks, it animates me. It does. I would have toned it down a little bit, but listening to that fellow, every

fibre in the body becomes lighted by passion, as you can see.

The beauty about being a Liberal is that all you have to do is say, "I'm a Liberal," and everybody is supposed to say, "Amen." "God bless. I'm a Liberal." They've got a policy for everybody: "I'm for the little guy. I'm for the big guy. I'm for the guy in the middle. We're for everybody. We represent the left. We represent the right. We represent the middle. We represent everybody. Elect us and nobody in this province of Ontario is going to be left out."

That's the Liberal Party — beautiful. I'd love to be a Liberal sometimes because you can do anything you want and say anything you want. You can say to the poor people, "I represent you, poor people," and you can say to the wealthy — and they've got a lot of wealthy backers, I tell you. They do. They pretend that only you fine Tories have wealthy backers, but the Libs? Martin, the millionaire Martin, the finance minister at the federal level, the \$25-million man: He's a wealthy guy. Did you see these four consultants in the Toronto Star the other day? These guys are all millionaires. They've got big bucks. They don't need any financing from anybody because they've got their own money. They're so pristine on that side.

Mr Gerretsen: What has this got to do with education?

Mr Marchese: You're so right. I want to get on to the issue. You're quite right. I was deterred for a passionate moment because the member for Windsor-Walkerville just made me do it. He brings out the best in me. I beg your pardon, Speaker. I want to get back to the issue now if I can.

On the issue at hand, nobody is pristine. The Libs did it, but they only went as far as the NDP. We did it too; we admit it. They were difficult times, I've got to tell you. And now the Tories are doing it under booming economic times.

You've got the big bucks in your pocket, right? You've never had so much money in your life as government, and what do you do? You cut in every area, while pretending always, "Oh no, we put money in." On the one hand you want to say how much you cut bloated bureaucracies, and on the other hand you say: "No, we put more money into universities. No, we put more money into education. Good God, we've put more money into health." They blow and suck at the same time. I don't know how you can do that. I don't know how on the one hand you can say, "We're cutting," and on the other hand you're saying, "We're spending big time." How do you do it? Please don't become Liberals in this regard. You can't have it both ways. You can't.

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You've had loads of money in the last couple of years and you could have used the money effectively to help everybody. But in this particular instance, you could have used your billions of surplus dollars to help university students. Having a daughter in university is a good lesson for me, because it teaches me the real cost of post-secondary education. I don't have to be told how costly it

is, because I know, and my daughter knows how costly it is.

Mr Wettlaufer: So do we.

Mr Marchese: Maybe some Tories know the cost, I don't know. But Tories, being as wealthy as they are, never have to worry about it. We have a class system; these people are class-connected. They're for the big guys and privatization of everything that moves and deregulation of everything that moves. They understand, we understand, and I think everybody out there understands it as well.

When they deregulate, as they're doing, they don't have a problem with that. Why? Because by and large, these folks here to my left, although right-wingers, have got the bucks. They've got the bucks not to have to worry about spending a mere \$5,000 a year, depending on the program, or maybe \$6,000, \$7,000, \$8,000 or \$9,000. It's not a big deal. And perhaps to send their children to live in residence as they travel to another city — when you do that, of course, your costs increase. It's no longer just the tuition fee of \$4,000, and now, with the deregulation, possibly \$8,000 or \$10,000, depending on the profession they're in, but if they're in residence we're talking big bucks. They have it.

Most homo sapiens, unlike homo superior Tories, have a financial problem, because they've got little jobs, like the bank tellers, who earn about \$22,000 or \$23,000. Bank presidents earn about \$1.5 million, excluding bonuses. Big and small: Tories big and the rest of the world small, having to fend for themselves, having to find money to try to help their children on a salary of \$20,000, \$25,000, \$30,000, \$35,000 or \$40,000 a year. It can't be done, because once you pay for your own social needs that connect to housing, that connect to clothing oneself and feeding oneself, you've got very little left over. So you can't help your child, or your big, grown-up daughter and son, with assistance with respect to tuition fees. You can't, let alone sending them to another town and helping them with the additional fee that entails. Most homo sapiens can't do it.

We've got a real problem in terms of how this party is dividing the issue, according to class: those who can afford it, which is where the Tories are very much situated, and those who cannot afford it. That's the dilemma that ordinary working people face, having to struggle to cope with this deregulation of university fees. This government is so happy to deregulate, because as they do this, they no longer have to take responsibility for hiking fees. They can say, "We didn't do it, the universities did it." As they have downloaded to municipalities the housing, public health, more welfare costs and more child care costs, they are now downloading tuition fees to the universities, and they quite proudly tell you — I mean, Mr Prichard, the president of U of T, in his oleaginous manner, is quite happy to have this government deregulate for him. On the one hand he's happy because he says, "If these Tories don't give me the money, I've got to get it somewhere." But on the other hand, to be so happy — I say "oleaginous manner" because it is a bit greasy, I can tell you.

What it means is that as you raise tuition fees, you exclude thousands of people. Why he should be happy to do so, I do not comprehend. While on the one hand he says, "Part of the money that we are going to raise through the hikes will be used for student assistance," that is only an assertion; it is not fact. We clearly don't know whether any of those few dollars are going to help a few people or a few more people, but it's certainly not going to help the vast majority of students who are in need. The fact that presidents are saying, "Don't worry. Don't be completely unhappy with deregulation. We're also going to help our students who are in need" — again I argue that it's an assertion, not a fact.

Everybody should worry, but people like my daughter have the existential experience. They know what it takes to go through a university education and not have the money. I have to tell you, I wish as a father I had the money to be able to pay for her tuition fees, but I do not, and I earn a good salary. It may surprise you, Speaker. You seem surprised. And it may surprise some of the members of the opposition that I cannot afford, having a good salary —

Mr Wettlaufer: I find that hard to believe.

Mr Marchese: Exactly. The member for Kitchener says he has a hard time believing what I'm saying. I make a good salary. I am middle class, to all intents and purposes. As a former teacher and as a member of provincial Parliament, earning a good salary, I cannot afford to help my daughter. Where is the rest of the society, who earn less than I do? We know that the people who are affected and afflicted by this problem are the middle classes in particular, and the working class, who only earn \$25,000 or \$30,000 or less, is more severely afflicted than the rest of us. Those who are listening know that what we say on this side of the House is true. Quite clearly, the forces of evil are on the other side, and they know that.

With this discussion on university fees, it is quite clear in the minds of most of the middle class that they can't afford to help their kids. Some people are blessed and put some money aside and are able to give that \$5,000 every year to their children, and they're done. Hopefully, the kids will be grateful for what they did, and they move on. But the vast majority do not. So while you gloat on the other side with smiles about how good this is and how good this is for students and how much money you've put into universities and say, "Gee, why are they complaining?" —

Mr Wildman: After they took \$400 million out.

Mr Marchese: But they don't talk about taking money out, and when you raise that issue they get offended. They have a grimace of offence. "Why do you raise such issues? They're not true," they probably argue. Right, member for Kitchener? But they don't talk about that.

The issue of access is a very critical one for me. I got involved, as a former teacher and then as a trustee with the Toronto Board of Education, on issues that relate to what we called, and still call, streaming. Working-class kids and people of colour get streamed very early on in life, and once kids get sorted out into the various groupings,

when you are in group 3 it's very difficult to move from group 3 to group 2 to group 1. Once you are committed to a special education program, it is very difficult to get out of that special education program.

That is why I never supported groupings of that nature. That is why I support what is called cooperative grouping, where every student is in the same class irrespective of ability, so that they all learn from each other, so that no one is sorted out into a stream and committed to that stream forever.

Those working-class students and people of race who are lucky enough to break out of that mould then have to face other kinds of difficulties down the line: the financial difficulty. If you're lucky enough, as a working-class child or as someone who's a person of colour, you then have to face the issue of: "Do I have enough money to get into university?" That's a real, real problem.

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The problems of streaming — there is just so much research on that topic that I could go on for some time, but we don't have that time. I need just to say that once you've made it, what we need to do as a society is facilitate education for those students as opposed to creating yet another burden. What you Tories are doing through this measure, particularly deregulating, is that you're creating yet another hurdle for those kids who've made it through the educational system.

Mr Wildman: A barrier.

Mr Marchese: You've created yet another barrier, and that's a more difficult barrier. My daughter took the year off last year to try to make some money so she can have enough money for the following year and the year after that. It's a difficult thing. There are a lot of people in my boat who have the same kind of problem.

What you're doing is that you're creating yet another burden for people to deal with. You're closing and shutting the doors for a whole number of people under the guise of making the educational system better.

Mr Wettlaufer: It's called responsibility.

Mr Marchese: Responsibility, my foot. The language of Tories, all these guys say and all you hear from them, is: "We are improving post-secondary education. We are increasing accessibility. We are increasing quality." I wrote the words down from the previous Tory speaker. "We are increasing accountability." All they do is just mumble words that they hope the public thinks they're actually doing, whereas in fact they're doing nothing of the sort.

My friend from Algoma talked about the income contingency fund. He made it quite clear that when you lower the payments, it means more payments down the line. He was quite clear on that. You people know that. Even the banks, as much as I berate and wail against them, they too said it's a bad plan, so you people don't know quite what to do.

We spoke about that and we have spoken to the issue of access. We've spoken to the issue of downloading. Therefore, the matter now that I want to touch on very briefly is the whole issue of private interest versus public.

What you Tories are doing — and it falls very much in line with your corporate friends, people like the Business Council on National Issues, conservative think tanks such as the Fraser Institute, the National Citizens' Coalition et al. These are the types — your buddies, closely connected to you — that you folks listen to, you family-value Tories you. These are the same groups that have been telling governments that education should be more expensive, that students should be paying a larger portion of the cost and that there should be a bigger differentiation between the élite universities and, dare I say, the proletariat kind of schools. That's what you people are encouraging: a class system.

You people are well situated in that regard and you know what you're doing. The Business Council on National Issues know what they're doing and they know what they're telling you. You people are listening to that garbage day in and day out. You have created a class system, where you are encouraging private interests versus the public interest. Universities have always been designed to protect the public interest; they are the institutions that are there to protect the public good. What you are creating is an individual who is concerned about his private needs, and it fits very well into your class system.

That's why people need to fight this government. That's why the vast majority of poor working people have to fight this government. Don't be confounded by their politics. If we're united, we can defeat them, in spite of what they have done and do to us on a daily basis.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and Training, responsible for colleges and universities, I'm pleased to respond to the motion on accessibility to Ontario's post-secondary education system.

I appreciate the comments from the member for Fort York. Accessibility, for every government, is a concern. Whether it was the NDP, which was in power last, or the Liberals, accessibility for people across Ontario is a major issue.

I appreciate the honesty from the member for Fort York, unlike maybe the member for Windsor-Walkerville — not that he's not honest. When we talk about accessibility and when we talk about tuition fee increases, the member for Fort York rightly pointed out that the NDP increased tuition fees by 50%. When the Liberals were in power, they increased it by 35%. I guess I could accept the argument from the NDP more readily. Although I totally disagree, I can accept their argument and understand it. But when the Liberals say they now want to freeze tuition fees, although while they were in power they increased them 35%, I guess I have a problem with that.

We're all worried about costs. The member for Fort York talked about his daughter going to university. I have four children, and two of them are college age right now. I'm concerned about the cost as well. Fortunately, my son has paid his own way. Hopefully, my daughter will do that. But they are fortunate.

For the opposition to say members on this side of the House don't understand, don't really care, it's really not

right to say that, because of course we care. How we ensure that our post-secondary education system is accessible is where we differ. We think differently about how to do it. In my few moments to speak, I hope to address those concerns.

When I was appointed parliamentary assistant in April 1997, I made a commitment to tour the colleges and universities across the province. My tour basically boiled down to one thing: to listen, to hear their concerns and bring those concerns back to the minister.

I met with students, I met with faculty, I met with the presidents, I met with support and administration staff. The highlight of the tour so far has been the northern tour. I met with all the colleges and universities in the north, and they told me that no one in government had done such an extensive tour of the north. They were very appreciative of that, and I certainly was too, because they have unique needs.

Time and time again, the students told me that they wanted a quality education at a reasonable cost. They knew there was a cost and that the government had to get its financial house in order, especially after the previous governments went on spending sprees. They knew that money didn't grow on trees, as I suspect the NDP thought it did.

They said: "We are now seeing reinvestment in post-secondary education, and that's good. But we also realize that we have to share in that investment. After all, we benefit from our education." That's what they told me.

Although cost was a factor, and it still is a factor, more importantly, they wanted to be assured that they were getting quality education so they could get the jobs in their fields of study, good-paying jobs, so they could pay their loans in a reasonable time frame based on their income. I couldn't agree with them more, and that's exactly what our government is doing.

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I was really surprised, especially with my children going to college, and also talking to the students. What I found out was that no one really sat down with them and went through what their skills were, what their aptitudes were, what courses they should be taking based on those skills and aptitudes, where the jobs were available, what was the default rate on those courses that they were taking, what was the pay of those jobs, and what was the financial plan to get through their universities and colleges.

We don't have a system in place, and everybody's responsible for that: the students, the colleges and universities, and government. So there's really concern out there and I believe what we're doing addresses these problems. It's not just about accessibility. It's about the quality of our post-secondary education system and it's about increasing the accountability of the colleges and universities. That's what we were elected to do, I believe, to look at all those three areas in post-secondary education.

When we talk about accessibility, the government needs to provide funding to assist students, and that's exactly what we're doing. We've established the Ontario

student opportunity trust fund to provide student aid to post-secondary education. This program is a partnership between the colleges and universities, the private sector and government, where government matches dollar for dollar what is raised with the colleges and universities and the private sector.

This is a major and phenomenal success story in Ontario. I remember our first budget. I think we had only put in \$100 million for this matching fund. Well, we've had to increase it to \$300 million and that has grown to \$600 million. This will assist 185,000 students over 10 years.

We've also increased OSAP, the Ontario student assistance program. People get that confused with the actual loans versus assistance. OSAP is grants, it's loan forgiveness, it's interest relief and it's bursaries. It's actually dollars — you might want to call them free dollars — from the government.

Interjections.

Mr David Caplan (Orlino): Absolutely nothing's free.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Order.

Mr Froese: We've increased it by 30% since we took over office, and that spending is estimated for the 1998 to 1999 fiscal year end at \$530 million.

We also looked at, if student fees are to increase — and again, the opposition just doesn't get it. They don't get it. How many times do you have to tell them, we're not increasing fees.

Mr Wildman: You are allowing them to increase.

Mr Froese: We're allowing them to increase, okay, but the decision is up to the colleges and universities. Where the colleges and universities choose to increase fees, there is some regulation. Each institution must place in reserves 30% for student aid, in addition to the amounts they've set aside in previous years. The maximum they can increase is no more than 20% for those who are currently enrolled in a college or university program.

Mr Caplan: For second-entry graduates. Come on, Tom.

Mr Froese: And I'll talk about that.

For programs with additional cost recovery — and those are business, commerce, secondary entry courses, dentistry, law and medicine for the universities, computer science and computer engineering for colleges — OSAP will recognize tuition fees and auxiliary fees to a maximum of \$4,500, and for a co-op it's another \$850. But the colleges and universities must provide aid to students who have additionally demonstrated need based on OSAP criteria over and above the \$4,500.

For the first-entry programs the aid may be in a grant form or a loan form, provided that the student's total debt, including repayable OSAP loans, does not exceed the normal \$7,000 for a normal academic year.

In second-entry programs, the loan may exceed \$7,000 but it has to include by the universities and colleges an income-contingent repayment provision.

One question that might be asked: If colleges and universities are to provide assistance to students, will this

lead to higher, unmanaged debt loads for students? The answer is no, because for the first-entry programs the student's repayable debt, including OSAP repayable loans, cannot exceed \$7,000, just like it is today. So they get, through OSAP, the reduction down to \$7,000.

In second-entry programs, the loan may exceed \$7,000 if it includes an income-contingent repayment provision. This will ensure that no students will incur unmanageable debt.

When we talk about accountability and quality, again, if the universities or the colleges decide they want to increase the fees, there is a system put in place whereby they can increase them 5% this year and next year, but it has to go to improve the quality of student programs. Examples are: smaller class sizes, curriculum enhancement, additional materials and equipment, and more access to teaching faculty. They can also increase 5% over the next two years if additional programs are improved, such as more access to computers and more opportunities for research.

We are also investing \$135 million over the next three years to improve competitiveness in university research by matching dollars from the Canada Foundation for Innovation.

The member for Fort York quite correctly pointed out that we do have support in the colleges and universities system, and it hits right on exactly what we're talking about where, if they are going to increase fees, they have to increase the quality of program. Paul Davenport, president of the University of Western Ontario, in a letter written May 7 said:

"Western strongly supports your government's policy of turning over the responsibility for setting fees to our board of governors, and we will use the new responsibility in a way that improves the quality of education and protects access for students from all economic backgrounds. Your policy on fees will encourage universities to build on their strengths and to offer programs of the highest quality to their students."

Robert Prichard, president of the University of Toronto, also said on May 7:

The University of Toronto "has adopted a new student financial aid policy which guarantees that no qualified student will be deprived of the opportunity to study at the University of Toronto due to lack of financial resources. This guarantee will ensure that access is protected for all qualified students regardless of means."

There is support. When we talk about accessibility, right away the opposition says, "There's no participation." The member from Kitchener talked about the participation rate. It's 35% compared to the Liberals' 26%. He talked about the data that the council of universities show, so I won't get into that.

My time is running out. I know the member for Northumberland wants to speak. I don't know how much time he's going to get.

Interjections.

Mr Froese: You want me to speak instead of him? All right.

Before I get into the funding, I would like to read a quote from Lyn McLeod, who is the Liberal critic on education, I presume. When she was the Minister of Colleges and Universities, on October 26, 1998, this is what she said.

Mr Wildman: No, 1988.

Mr Froese: Sorry, 1988. You're right.

"The onus is on Ottawa, not Queen's Park, to ensure that Canadian universities are as well funded as their American counterparts." Figure that one out from what she's saying today. The federal government cut the province by \$2.2 billion in transfer payments to post-secondary education, health care and social services, and here the critic for education said that Ottawa, not Queen's Park, is the one to provide the funding. I don't understand why she doesn't take all her members with her, go to Ottawa right now and hammer on the door to provide that funding. I encourage her to do that. If she would do that, I'd be there right beside her, helping her out.

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The government's commitment to post-secondary education is considerable. Funding for post-secondary education, including grants to colleges and universities as well as provincial support for student assistance, will be \$2.9 billion in 1998-99. We mentioned already in the 1998 Ontario budget that we're providing \$600 million over three years in new investment, and that includes the \$29 million that was mentioned before to recognize those Ontario universities that have increased students' access to post-secondary education.

I'd like to touch for a few minutes on the access to opportunities program, and the \$150 million that we've provided to enable twice as many students to enrol in computer sciences and high-demand engineering programs. This is where we talked about not only access for students, with the \$150 million, but about accountability and quality of programs.

Mr Wildman: What about sociology and geography?

Mr Froese: If you will bear with me, I'll just get to that.

There has been extensive dialogue with the university community on the access to opportunities initiative, which is a partial cost recovery program that will allow universities the flexibility to invest in quality programs and expansion of student spaces in the high-demand technical programs. This program will create thousands of new student spaces in the high-demand engineering and computer science programs in Ontario's colleges and universities.

Apparently there has been a misunderstanding on the obligations of the colleges and universities and I want to clear up some of that. Universities and colleges that wish to deregulate tuition fees — they don't have to but if they want to — must comply with the components of the plan, including improving quality, increasing seating capacity and setting aside 30% of increased revenues to help students who are in need. They cannot, and I repeat, they cannot, simply increase tuition fees without providing the service improvements I've mentioned.

I want to mention again — and you might be sick of hearing it but you have to understand — it's the universities that increase the fees, not the government. The decision to increase tuition fees is made by the board of directors of each institution. Any revenue that is derived from tuition fees must meet certain conditions. First, such funds must improve the quality of the education programs, as I mentioned before, and 30% must be set aside for student aid. They must make a public quality education improvement plan within 12 months after approving a fee increase and report it annually thereafter to show how the revenues are actually used.

Universities and colleges are required to ensure that adequate financial aid is available for all academically qualified students accepted in additional cost recovery programs. For first-entry programs — I know we explained this a little bit earlier but a little bit more detail here — additional financial assistance provided by the universities or colleges which must be in the form of grants, not loans. For second-level programs, they will be combined with income-contingent loan repayment programs, as well as grants.

This is designed so that no students will incur unmanageable debt loads. This is a real plus for the students across the province. If they don't comply with that, their operating grant will be reduced by government. They must comply.

Mr Gerretsen: How is that a plus for students?

Mr Froese: The opposition wants to know why it's a plus. They only talk about accessibility with dollars. Two previous governments never addressed the quality of the program or the accountability of the system. The balance of increased revenues will be used for improvements in the quality of students' educational programs, or in the case of computer sciences, engineering and related college programs, to expand the number of spaces available to students to study in the fields they choose. Students in engineering and computer sciences will benefit because more spaces will be available, and obviously they'll be more likely to be accepted into the course.

These measures give flexibility to the system by allowing colleges and universities to enhance the quality of their programs, while providing at the same time more funding for student assistance. There will also be greater accountability to the university and college community for the use of those tuition fees.

On Friday, Speaker — you probably are aware of this — the universities and colleges received the details of the access to opportunities program in a memo from the ministry. The memo informed universities that the province will provide — I hope the opposition hears this. They talk about more money; here it is. We will introduce a new annual grant of \$5,000 for each engineering student, \$3,500 for students in computer science, and \$2,000 for new college students beginning 1998-99, which is this fall.

In addition to this new annual provincial grant, universities and colleges can access one-time expansion funding for those programs up to \$19,600 per student through

access to opportunities, government and private sector funding. Our government strongly believes in a shared responsibility, and that's why we've made available for the private sector to match contributions, and the government will put up \$9,800 per space.

The program to increase the number of student spaces in high-demand programs is a partnership between government, universities and colleges and the private sector and it's long overdue. As you are no doubt aware, Speaker, the Canadian Association for Technology Advancement highlighted a crisis in Ontario's high-tech industry when reportedly 20,000 high-tech jobs in our province are unfilled because we don't have the educated people to fill them. Twenty thousand people could have jobs today if they were educated, and that's why we're doing what we're doing.

Access to opportunities will help correct this situation, create thousands of job opportunities and improve Ontario's international competitiveness. With the implementation of this program, we anticipate an increase in the number of spaces available in the programs by 20% for this fall, in time for the students who are graduating this spring to take advantage of this new access to opportunity.

We believe accessibility will be there, we believe quality will be there and we believe we have put in place our plan to ensure there is accountability in the system to make it happen.

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Mr Conway: I want to join the debate this afternoon. I've had the pleasure of listening to most of the previous speakers, and I must say, while I didn't agree with everything the previous speaker had to say, he gets full marks for a valiant defence of a controversial policy. We've all been around this circle in my time here, and I've got my sins for which atonement is probably due, but there is a qualitative difference today compared to any time in my prior life here as a member of the assembly. We are now looking at qualitatively different realities. We're talking today about accepting tuition fees on an annual basis of five times the inflation rate. We're talking about driving tuition into a stratosphere where it has not previously been.

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): You raised it.

Mr Conway: Yes, we raised it, it's true. I as minister approved tuition fees, and so did Dr Stephenson and so did Mrs McLeod and so did Richard Allen. That is a given. Almost always in those circumstances there was a two-part announcement. The government approved a tuition fee increase, and at the selfsame time there was an adjustment in the support to students. That did not happen in this case, and it's a very noticeable difference.

But that's not really my focus. My focus is that we are talking today about rates of increase that are well beyond what we've seen before. It has been pointed out by previous speakers, including the current Minister of Education, that in my time as minister we increased the rates by 30% over a five-year period. I haven't myself gone back to look at it, but I bet you that's more or less the inflation rate

over a five-year period. I can tell you that in the mid-to-late 1990s we're looking at inflation of approximately 2%, sometimes a bit more, sometimes a bit less. We are talking now about annual increases of 10%. That is the difference.

Let me say something else. I say this to my generation, and I say it in a non-partisan way. I spent five years in university. I was able, fortunately, to pay most of it through summer work and some scholarship and other money. But it was only possible, quite frankly, because the Robarts and the Davis administrations felt the political pressure from people like my parents, who fought through a Depression and fought through a war, and they did so for some cause: They wanted their kids to have an opportunity they did not have. For my generation — I'm 46 years of age and I want to thank Bill Davis and John Robarts and my parents' generation, because they made it possible for me to get a virtually free university education. I paid \$2,000 at the beginning and I think it was probably \$2,500 at the end, and there were two or three job offers waiting for virtually all of us upon graduation.

That my generation, which got it for nearly free, should ascend the nearest pulpit and preach ad nauseam that our kids, this generation, should pay a much, much greater fee is the alpha and the omega of hypocrisy. I am so tired of reading *Globe* and *Mail* editorials and *Ottawa Citizen* opinion pieces written by 40-something baby-boomers who want a decidedly different policy for this generation of young adults than that which Mr Davis and Mr Robarts provided for mine.

More than anything else, that's my anger in this. I am just furious, I am absolutely furious, to be lectured by some of these people who got it virtually for free who now stand up and say to my 19-year-old niece, who tonight is up in Eganville, Ontario, with her friends looking at her prospects at McMaster, Queen's, Western — and when I hear the president of the University of Western Ontario say he thinks it's a great idea, I bet he does. I never heard a defence secretary who didn't like the sound of McDonnell Douglas or Boeing's latest stealth bomber. Of course he likes it.

I say, only for myself because my critic would not want to share in this, if I were a 19-year-old today and thinking of going to Western Ontario, do you know what I'd say to Mr Davenport, who can hardly contain himself in his cheering, not so much for the government announcement but for "Let the sky be the limit"? "Mr Davenport, I'm not going to give you one red penny until I see a forensic audit of the way you're running the University of Western Ontario." Boy, I wouldn't give him one red cent before I got a damn good look at how he's running that institution, and I'm telling you, by the time that forensic audit was finished, I suspect it would not be S. Conway who would be embarrassed, if some of the audits that have been done previously in this province or, more interestingly, in the United States are any guide.

The nerve of the Davenports of the world — the nerve. It's too bad Mike Gourley's leaving us. I don't know how many of you know where Gourley was before he became

the Deputy Minister of Finance. I don't want to embarrass him, but he's a very bright, insightful fellow is our Michael Gourley, and I could certainly embarrass a few people, telling a few tales out of school, at what was found at certain institutions.

It just enrages me when I hear the likes of Davenport and his pals in the \$200,000 club saying, "Oh, of course, let the 18-year-old kid from Palmer Rapids or Eganville or Deep River or Beachburg in the rural areas of my part of the province — no, I think these people should pay a few thousand bucks more to come to my institution, where I have done precious little to show increased accountability." Boy, would I like to get a look at Western, to name but one.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Then he goes home in his limo.

Mr Conway: Oh, he's got his limo.

I don't want to get distracted, but where is the shame in this place? We're talking about young people. I repeat, there are few things that I am more thankful to my parents for, having as they did survived the Depression and survived the war, to give their kids, all seven of us in my family — I think it totalled 35 years of university education. That was made possible largely because we had a public policy that made it affordable. I'm telling you what you all know in your hearts, that when we increase these fees to this level, we are going to bar entry to a number of people, without a doubt. All the literature in this jurisdiction and elsewhere points to it.

I believe in our liberal democracy because as one of its tenets we believe in education as a first order of public good, and what are we saying to our community and what are we saying to young people, Tom Froese's kids and others? They are not stupid. They hear us talking as legislators at the board of trade and wherever else about marginal tax rates for people in high-income categories: "They're too high, they might leave." Those are real issues, and I don't dispute a Conservative's or a Liberal's or a socialist's worry about that. But what about the 18-year-old who in Eganville tonight is looking at his or her prospects — 11,000 bucks to go to med school, 80,000 to 90,000 bucks of debt at the end of that road?

Think about it for a moment. If you're a kid from Harry Danford's area, you're going to think twice about incurring \$80,000 or \$90,000 of front-end debt before you go down the road to Western. If you're Danford or Conway, you represent all kinds of people who don't have to worry just about the increased fee for tuition, but we've got the living expenses. Every single one of my constituents, like my friend from Muskoka-Georgian Bay, every one of our kids has to pack up and leave town. They don't have the option that five million people do in the Metro area of going to three or four universities in the area. They don't have that choice if they live in Britt or if they live in Palmer Rapids or if they live in Rawdon township. They have to pack up lock, stock and barrel and leave town.

There's an equity issue there that Davenport I don't think understands, but that we as a Legislature have a duty to understand. It's not an easy question, and I don't agree

with perhaps even all of my colleagues in some aspects of this. I have said from the beginning I accept differential fees; I always have. But 11,000 bucks for one year in med school? That is beyond the pale. There's some very good literature, and I'm sorry I didn't bring it to the House tonight, about what this pricing policy is doing to both private and tier-one public universities in the United States. It is causing all kinds of trouble.

Mr Froese: What's the answer?

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Mr Conway: I think we're going to have to look. I tell you, Tom, I will not stand here and endorse an annual tuition increase five times inflation. That is too bloody high. I think we're going to have to look and find some answers. I'm not going to be trite about this. I listen to my friends looking at their kids' college and university education. You know, Stats Canada just a few weeks ago published a bulletin, and I'm going to conclude with this because I'm biting into somebody's time, I'm sure. "In the period of 1990-97 in Canada, there were created net new 770,000 jobs." But the reality was, "For people with a college and university education, there were 1.8 million new jobs. For people with a high school education or less, 1,050,000 jobs were lost."

Education, and most particularly higher education, is, as Bruce Little said in the *Globe and Mail*, "the brutal divide of a modern economy." As we head into the 21st century, college and university education is going to be for Tom Froese's kids what a high school education was for Tom's father. We'd better understand that and we'd better have a policy that is sensible — affordable, yes — but that recognizes that higher education has to be and must be seen to be a public good available to all citizens irrespective of what their incomes are or where they live in this vast and magnificent land.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I thank you for the opportunity to respond and speak on opposition day particularly as it relates to education and tuition fees.

I sat over here on the government side, listening to my good friend from Renfrew North telling of all the troubles and all the problems and all the things that are wrong with what we're doing. But you know, opposition has a responsibility to come up with some alternative suggestions. I was keenly listening to see if there might be an alternative tuition suggestion and I recall that at the last NDP convention they came up with the brilliant suggestion of free tuition. The only upsetting part for the Liberals is that they didn't come up with that idea first. How practical.

It's not surprising at all, but I heard the member for Renfrew North making reference to the Robarts government, to the Davis government, and yes, it was very nice in those days to be able to keep tuition low. You came out to a market with all kinds of jobs, a large number of jobs readily available, and yes, I recall those days. Why? It was because taxation was reasonably low and we didn't have the insurmountable debt in this country that we're now struggling with.

Where did that debt come from? I won't get partisan here because it came from several different stripes of government looking at very socialistic directions, and the end result was the problem we have today: the extremely high taxation, the extremely high debt and deficit that we're struggling with. Yes, we had our parents who came through a terrible Depression. They survived it, they also survived the Second World War, but they never imagined, never dreamed, when they were struggling with that Second World War, that they'd end up with the debt that we have today. They paid off the war debt and they were very proud to have paid off that war debt, but they didn't expect to end up with the provincial debt that we have today and end up with the federal debt that we have here today.

Free tuition? What a novel ideal. I wasn't surprised when it came out in the paper, what the NDP came up with, but then the old Liberal "tax and spend," they just love it, and the NDP "spend and borrow," and here we are in the present debt situation that we have today.

The idea of limiting tuition really is an artificial ceiling, and the economists can tell us what happens with artificial ceilings. We came through it with rent control, and what did we end up with? A billion-dollar boondoggle on an annual basis —

Mr Gerretsen: Who started rent control?

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, come to order.

Mr Galt: — nobody developing any new accommodations, any new rentals, any new homes, because of the total —

Mr Wildman: That was Bill Davis's idea.

Mr Galt: The reason it came in — yes, it was in the Bill Davis government but it was a minority government, and who pushed it through but the socialists? No question. The NDP wrote it in, and here we are with rent control, an artificial ceiling that really is just more indication of what happens when you bring in those ceilings. We also, back in the 1950s and 1960s, saw what happened when you brought in an artificial floor for various prices of butter and eggs and some of the agricultural commodities. We ended up with all kinds of surpluses that had to be disposed of.

We are making change for post-secondary education and, yes, I can understand the concerns, but just for a moment let's look at some of the spinoffs that are occurring from public education.

One of the things that's happening as a spinoff from our public education reform is the fact that the private school and independent school operators are very concerned with those changes. Why are they concerned? Well, in the past it was the disgruntled parents who took their children out of the public system and put them into the private schools and independent schools, and they have had in the past few years great, long lists of people wanting to get into private schools. What's going on now? All of a sudden, with the changes in the education system, they can see that the public is going to be much happier with the public education system and the demand for private schools is

going to go down. End result: They're not going to be getting the same kind of response to their education as they were in the past.

I looked in the red book and I found that on tuition it's all things to all people. That wasn't too surprising. Then I looked in the Common Sense Revolution and I think, just for the public at home, they really should know what we said in the Common Sense Revolution.

What the Common Sense Revolution said, page 12, the sixth edition — it became so popular we just had to keep printing it: "Our universities and community colleges have suffered from government's failure to set priorities, resulting in lower-quality service to students. We believe that sufficient funding can be provided while still reducing the burden on the taxpayers by \$400 million.

"Colleges and universities must take on the obligation to find as much of that \$400-million saving as possible by streamlining their bureaucracies and operating systems. The remainder of necessary funding can be found by charging students a fairer share of the costs of the education they receive."

It goes on. There's quite a bit here, but it's very specific to what we're doing. We do in fact keep our promise, as has been indicated earlier.

What has been happening with tuition increases in the past? As our friend from Renfrew North indicated, he as Minister of Education did grant some increases, and during the Liberals' term that increased by some 35%. It increased during the NDP term by some 50% from 1990 to 1995.

I think we should also look at the participation rate of students between the ages of 18 and 24 at university. When the Liberals were there it ran at 26%. Today it's running at 35%. That's an increase of approximately 35% of our young people who are taking part in post-secondary education.

What's happening with the budget? Some \$2.9 billion is being spent on post-secondary education. That works out to some \$300 per year for every man, woman and child. Whether it's a young child in diapers or an elderly person in a walker, that works out to \$300 for everyone that's going to help with provincial support and grants for universities and community colleges.

During our term we have announced \$600 million of new money over the next three years to be spent on universities and community colleges. Some \$150 million over the next three years will be used to double the number of spaces for computer science, and we'll also double the courses for engineering, a very demanding program indeed.

I'm also very pleased to find that with the student opportunity trust fund, where we match dollar for dollar the public donations, we have some \$600 million in reserve to support students. With the Ontario student assistance program, commonly known as OSAP, in the 1995-96 budget there was some \$400.7 million in spending, which has increased this year to \$530 million, an increase of 33%. That's the kind of money that this government is spending on post-secondary education.

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With the increases in tuition, 30% of all the increase will be set aside for student aid, and it's estimated that this year alone there will be some \$85 million set aside. It must be linked to quality of student programs, quality improvement plans must be produced, and it must also be related to additional education programs.

By allowing tuition fee increases, what this is really all about, the increases for universities and also for colleges, is enhancing the program quality. It's back to when you put that ceiling in place, like happened with rent control, quality ends up suffering, and certainly it has in this instance. It's also related to increased funding for students and to providing greater accountability.

It will increase very significantly the numbers of engineering spaces and computer science programs as just mentioned, and also related programs in community colleges.

There is a limit of course. It sounded from the previous speaker as if there was absolutely no limit. For most courses it will be limited to 5% per year for the next two years. The first 5% has to be related to improved quality of student programs, and the second 5% per year for additional educational programs.

There are some other programs where there are all kinds of jobs and opportunities out there, such as dentistry, law, medicine, pharmacy, where we are allowing more discretionary increase with additional fees. In those various programs, it averaged out in the past to about 8%. That's what the tuition represents of the total cost of the educational program. That means the public is paying the other 92%, or 92 cents on the dollar, for those programs, and that doesn't just quite seem fair. However, to protect the students already in those programs, we are limiting that increase to some 20%.

I think it's important to have a check on some of the quotes that we have from people, particularly the Liberal government in the past. From Lyn McLeod back in the 1980s —

Mr Gerretsen: That's ancient history.

Mr Galt: "The onus is on Ottawa, not Queen's Park, to ensure that Canadian universities are as well funded as their American counterparts," says Lyn McLeod, Ontario Minister of Colleges and Universities."

The source is the Bulletin of the University of Toronto, November 1988.

She's also aware, I'm sure, if that's history and she doesn't want to recall her quote, of the Liberal government in Ottawa cutting some \$2.2 billion out of transfer payments for post-secondary education, health care and social services.

Then there was the quote:

"A lot of Ontario institutions are hurting financially because the government is tightening the purse-strings. Hospitals are closing beds and cutting back on services. Universities are rejecting qualified students because of overcrowded facilities and out-of-date equipment. Nixon [former Liberal Treasurer] in refusing to offer substantial,

needed funding, suggested that such institutions look for 'innovative' ways to raise money from other sources."

That quote is from the Financial Post, July 5, 1988.

I did make reference to the red book earlier, but there's really nothing in that red book that warrants comment at this time.

I would like to bring a quote to your attention which —

Mr Gerretsen: Come on. What do you mean there's nothing worth commenting on?

Mr Galt: No, I won't quote Lyn McLeod from before.

This is Bonnie Patterson, president of the Council of Ontario Universities, in a press release, May 7, 1998:

"The Ministry of Education and Training's new tuition fee policy is an important step towards ensuring that our universities have greater flexibility to set fees and, more importantly, to reinvest revenue in improving the quality of education for students," coming from the universities.

From the press, talking about post-secondary education in the Globe and Mail:

"Important facts emerge from that StatsCan study. First students are still paying only a fraction of the real cost of their education. In 1995, for every dollar in tuition fees, universities got nearly three more from the government."

The heading, "Let Tuition Fees Rise," Globe and Mail, October 1, 1997.

Then another quote:

"Deregulation is a necessary condition for institutional development and adaptation, which will lead to expanded opportunities for learning. This position is practical, not ideological."

That's from the Report of the Advisory Panel on Future Directions for Postsecondary Education, page 19, December 1996.

Looking at tuitions and doing something with post-secondary education is really about getting people working here in Ontario, and we've been doing a lot to help get people working and creating jobs in Ontario.

First, we've eliminated a tremendous amount of red tape. We've created a climate to encourage business. We've reduced taxation. It is a bit discouraging just as we get rolling, then up come strikes from people like dry-wallers. The future for jobs is information technology, and that's really the area that's developing very, very quickly in this country. It's disturbing to see that once we get below 8% unemployment, we don't have the necessary skills in this country. We start going overseas and looking outside of the jurisdiction of Canada to find the trained people.

Just touring a plant recently in Cobourg, the manager of that plant said to me: "I don't want to hear anything more about unemployment. I'm unable to hire the people with the skills who want to work and get on with it." The skills that they require are just not available. We all know for years and years, going back for several decades, that we've always been short of tool and dye makers and have had to go out of the country to find those.

The opposition often talks about the brain drain and "Why are people leaving this country, going elsewhere for

jobs?" The reason is high taxation. Who created the high taxation? Who created the high debt? No wonder —

Interjection.

Mr Galt: That's right. The high taxation came from over there and the high debt came over from the NDP.

There's no question some of our people, law, dentistry, medicine, are getting cheap tuition, going through university here, and once they graduate, then what do they do? They want to move to where it's very cheap taxation-wise, and it's understandable why they would be doing that kind of thing.

To wind up — we're down to just a few seconds — we've really been talking about tuition, improving quality of education, recognizing that there has to be a change in Ontario. I've talked about a lot of the quotes and some of the things the Liberals were saying in the previous government. Above all, this change in post-secondary education will certainly improve quality education.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): Time won't allow me to respond to some of the garbage that I heard over there, even from the NDP who themselves have contributed to this great increase. I was taken aback — I must comment about the member for Fort York attacking the Liberal government of the time, a government which had increased tuition fees 50%, then coming and attacking us and turning around to the present government, increasing it 60% and saying that is access.

Let me just take a few minutes to represent a few of the concerns of citizens in my constituency and also of my two daughters. Upon graduation each daughter had about \$30,000 worth of loans to pay back. Of course after the first degree you would feel they would have access to jobs. No. One other daughter had to go on to do her master's, and Deone has done very well.

She's typical of what's happening in my constituency and people who are concerned about access to education, because this government has made it so difficult with the increase in tuition fees. One of the members was talking about rent control. That also has made it so difficult, that students today who go outside their area to rent are finding a rapid increase in the cost of their rental accommodation — another increase, another denial of access to education.

They have the gall to stand here and say that by doing all that they are improving access and improving quality of education. I don't know why you don't swallow your tongues, speaking that way. You just took these briefing notes from your bureaucrats and said, "Let's read it." Have some sort of conscience within yourself and say, "Is this true access?" No, it is not access, not in the least.

Then you bring in some rather fancy talk about income-contingent loans. The poorer people will pay more, because if you forgo your loans and only pay interest, in the long run you will be paying more.

Don't come here and try to convince us you're doing well in regard to access. Don't come here and tell us that things are so bad when in the meantime, while you have money, you're giving it away and increasing the debt and putting a greater load on those who are graduating and not finding jobs. Many of those people who are graduating are

trekking to the United States to get jobs to pay off their loan, a greater loan that you have increased. You should be ashamed of yourselves, talking about improving access and improving quality of education in our province when you are doing the reverse.

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Mr Caplan: I'm very pleased to join this debate. I would just point out to all the members that the rules of the game really have changed. We live in a global society, in a knowledge-based economy, and when you live in that kind of society what happens is that your most important investment is the investment you make in people.

Look at what our competitor south of the border has done. South of the border, 48 of 50 states have increased by an average of 10% the amount of money they are funding into public education at a post-secondary level. By contrast, what have we done in Ontario? Remember, we're in direct competition with the United States. We've decreased our amount of funding by 15% over that period of time. So while our competitors are investing in their young people, we're pulling back those funds. We're placing a greater burden — in fact, Ontario, as many of my colleagues have noted, ranks 10th out of 10 in terms of university funding in Canada. It is a national shame.

I must also share with you the fact that in the last provincial election campaign, my Tory colleagues promised that university tuitions, the amount that students should pay towards the cost of their university, should be about 25%. In fact, I'll quote from the Blueprint for Learning. It says, "Tuition fees should be allowed to rise over a four-year period to 25%." Last year tuition fees accounted for 35%. In fact, at Nipissing University, tuitions account for in excess of 50% of the cost of university. Isn't that amazing? Another broken promise, doubly broken in North Bay. I can't imagine how the member from that region looks at himself in the mirror.

University tuition is part of it. One of the other parts is access to student assistance. Let's look at what the government has done to restrict and remove access to student assistance. They have increased the amount that parents must contribute towards their children's education. You might want to say: "Listen, we've funded a tax cut. People have extra money." Well, for a typical family of four earning \$60,000 combined income, your tax cut is about \$2,000 over four years. But for one year, you're now required to fund \$8,000 towards the cost of post-secondary education — \$8,000 over one year.

The government has changed their plan from loan forgiveness to a plan of grants. This saves the government some money in interest payments, and you have claims by members of the government and the Minister of Education that this is so-called new money. It is not true.

The government says: "We're going to move to an income-contingent plan. One of the things we're going to do is make it easier for our students to repay the amount of loan they have." So what did they do? They went to the federal government and said, "Join us in this plan." The federal government said: "We're not interested. We're interested in helping students and we're going to come out

with a system of scholarship and grants." Then they went to the banks and the banks said to them: "We're not interested in your income-contingent plan. The reason is because you've done absolutely nothing to restrain the amount of debt the students are going to be facing."

So now what have they done? These genius financial managers have now said: "Great. We'll lay it on universities. We'll make them give loans on an income-contingent basis to students," when the banks, when financial institutions, when the federal government, when students themselves have said this is a bad idea.

I want to highlight a couple of other areas. One is in the area of part-time students. This government has said that part-time students no longer qualify for even one penny of OSAP, not one red cent. That is an absolute shame. I cannot believe that people who are looking to upgrade their skills and their abilities cannot get any help from the government.

I'll highlight only one last example. The provincial government has been nickel-and-diming students. There used to be a phone line that you could call as a student to find out what the status of your file was. It was a 1-800 number; it would go to Thunder Bay. They changed that. Now it's a toll system to a 1-900 number. Nickels and dimes.

There is just no end to the shamelessness of Mike Harris and the Tory government. They have treated students with contempt. It is time they adopted Dalton McGuinty's suggestion of a tuition freeze today, and I'm proud to support that resolution.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): It's my privilege and my special responsibility, I feel, to raise the issue of the tuition fee skyrocketing that's taking place in this province and to try to bring home to the members of the government the significance of their so doing.

On the one hand, we're simply talking about tuition fee hikes. But what we're really talking about here in its essence is how bright a future our province is going to have.

Today in the Legislature the Speaker took the opportunity to introduce to us the new group of pages. There are perhaps 20 new pages in here who are in grade 7 or 8.

Maybe it's opportune and only right that we look into the face of the future rather than discuss this concept in the abstract. For government members in particular I think it's important to understand that if these young people do well, our province does well. If they don't have an opportunity to pursue post-secondary studies because they've been shut out because the cost is simply too great, that doesn't bode well for our province. That doesn't bode well for us as individuals.

Let's remember, this is a public-private gain. That's what post-secondary studies are all about. It's a win-win situation. Whenever any young person in our province who has the ability to do so goes on to pursue post-secondary studies, that's in the interest of all Ontarians.

So when we strive to make sure that college and university studies are affordable by Ontario's youth, that is

more than just some kind of effort on our part to be kind to young people. It's part of the most intelligent industrial strategy you can have in a knowledge-based economy.

I think people understand implicitly now — there's been so much change that's been unfolding all around us — that we can't get by simply by taking things out of the ground or by cutting down trees that grow on the face of the earth. We've got to, wherever possible, invest in our young people and cultivate the human mind. That's our greatest resource today — people — and right now we've got young people who are graduating from their first degree at university with a debt load in the range of \$25,000.

Three weeks ago I visited Sault Ste Marie. They have an unemployment rate in Sault Ste Marie of 20% and rising.

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I had the opportunity to speak to a group of high school students. All of those students told me they intended to pursue university studies. They will have to leave Sault Ste Marie in order to do so.

I was thinking to myself, if one of them wanted to pursue medical studies here in Toronto at the University of Toronto, that would mean they'd have to, of course, move here and pay for their rent, their food, their transportation and their books, and that would be in addition to an annual tuition fee of \$11,000. That would mean that if you wanted to pursue medical studies at the University of Toronto and you were from out of town, you'd be paying about \$20,000 every year. There are three years in medical school. That would be \$60,000. They would already have a \$25,000 debt load from their undergraduate degree, so we're up to a total of \$85,000 to pursue medical school.

I think it's important for us just to stop for a minute and ask ourselves, how many of us in here are enjoying the quality of life that we lead, how many of us are enjoying the economic returns that we experience as a result of our parents, the previous generation, deeming that it was important to keep the school doors open to us? They had the courage and the vision and the simple understanding to know that it's absolutely vital that we make room at the university and college table for our young people so that they can pursue post-secondary studies.

This government's lost sight of that good example. Not only did the government before, the NDP government, hike tuition fees by 50%, this government is hiking them by 60%. Then on top of that they're deregulating certain kinds of programs, like the professional degrees — medical school, dentistry, architecture, engineering, law school and the like.

We used to play by some rules which I think most people agreed were quite fair when it came to getting into college and university in this province. Those rules were very simple: You had to work hard and you had to get good marks, and if you did those two things, you'd get into college or university. Now we've got a new rule. A third new rule to be added to the others now obtains. That third rule says, "But you've got to be wealthy, your parents have to have money." Now, not only do you have to have

the marks and the hard work, but you have to have the personal or the family wealth.

I think that's a step backwards. The reason we enjoy the quality of life that we do in this province is because so many of us have had the opportunity to pursue post-secondary studies. That's because previous generations have said, "Look, it's important that we pay our taxes and that we fund post-secondary studies to the extent that young people can pursue those studies in a way that's accessible and affordable to them."

Suddenly today in Ontario, in 1998, we're changing all of that. We're telling young people: "You want to pursue post-secondary studies? You're on your own." We feel no sense of responsibility. We who have been through the system, capitalized on all the opportunities, acquired the good education, got the good jobs, earning the good income, now say to the province's young, "You're on your own."

I think that is nothing less than selfish and I think it's nothing less than shortsighted. It's absolutely critical that we make sure in this economy, which people understand if it's going to be very successful has to be knowledge-based, we've got to understand that it's in our selfish interests — and maybe this is the language I should be speaking to the government — that our young people be able to pursue post-secondary studies.

Quite clearly, the government doesn't understand that. They've decided that a tax cut is more important than making sure we keep the doors open at our colleges and universities to the young people from the struggling middle class and from the poor, and we do have poor in Ontario. The best way to remove yourself from that — I can think of my dad: from the Ottawa Valley farm, six kids, he was the only one who went beyond grade 11. I can tell you, his father had left home, his mother was on her own. He would not have been able to go on and pursue studies right up to the post-PhD level unless universities were affordable to him. He worked damned hard to get there. I can tell you, as one of 10 kids in my family, that we have all benefited from the older generation that kept the doors open for us. I like to think that we have all done well and we're all paying our taxes, and I know we all have the expectation that we will do in our turn our part to keep our colleges and universities open to people who can't afford to spend a huge amount of money to acquire a post-secondary education.

I'm asking government members now to reconsider their post-secondary tuition fee policy; to understand the real consequences of jacking up those fees and putting them through the roof; to understand what it means to the hopes and dreams of our young people; to understand what it means to the very future of our province. The more we can keep post-secondary education affordable and accessible, the brighter the future we are going to have in Ontario. They've got to understand that.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr McGuinty has moved opposition day motion number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members; a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1757 to 1802.

The Deputy Speaker: Will the members take their seats. Mr McGuinty has moved opposition day motion 3.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Boyd, Marion
Bradley, James J.
Caplan, David
Castrilli, Annamarie
Colle, Mike
Conway, Sean G.
Crozier, Bruce
Cullen, Alex

Curling, Alvin
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Hoy, Pat
Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Marchese, Rosario
McGuinty, Dalton
McLeod, Lyn

Miclash, Frank
Morin, Gilles E.
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Silipo, Tony
Wildman, Bud
Wood, Len

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise.

Nays

Amott, Ted
Baird, John R.

Grimmett, Bill
Harnick, Charles

O'Toole, John
Palladini, Al

Barrett, Toby
Boushy, Dave
Brown, Jim
Carr, Gary
Carroll, Jack
Chudleigh, Ted
Danford, Harry
DeFaria, Carl
Doyle, Ed
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Fox, Gary
Froese, Tom
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve

Hastings, John
Hodgson, Chris
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Johnson, David
Johnson, Ron
Kells, Morley
Leach, Al
Leadston, Gary L.
Martiniuk, Gerry
McLean, Allan K.
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Newman, Dan

Parker, John L.
Preston, Peter
Runciman, Robert W.
Shea, Derwyn
Sheehan, Frank
Skarica, Toni
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Tilson, David
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Vankoughnet, Bill
Villeneuve, Noble
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Young, Terence H.

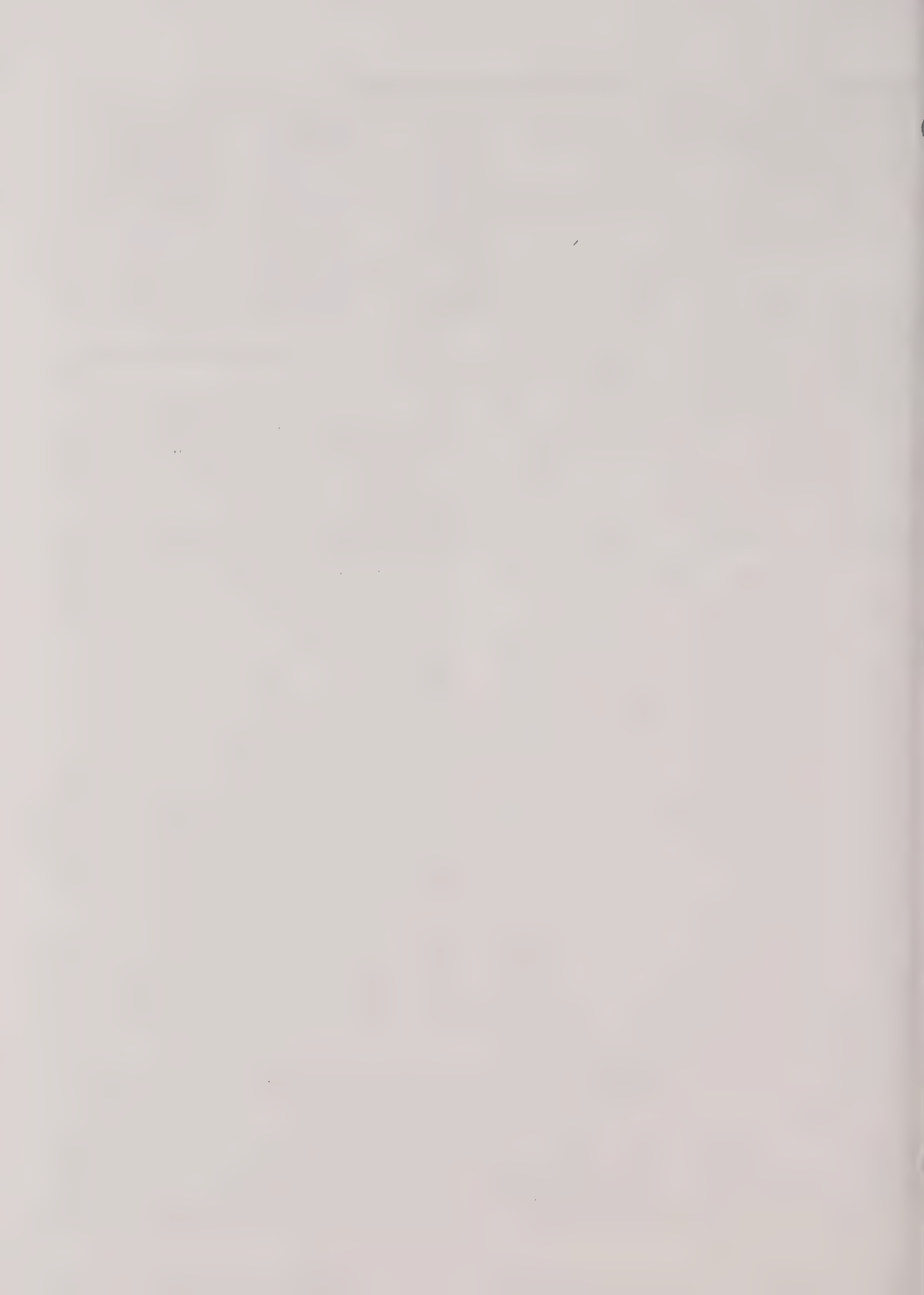
Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 30, the nays are 51.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It now being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock this evening.

The House adjourned at 1807.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Agostino, Dominic	Hamilton East / -Est	L	
Arnott, Ted	Wellington	PC	parliamentary assistant (Small Business) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur petites entreprises) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Baird, John R.	Nepean	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Finances
Barrett, Toby	Norfolk	PC	
Bartolucci, Rick	Sudbury	L	
Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel	St Andrew-St Patrick	PC	Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Beaubien, Marcel	Lambton	PC	
Bisson, Gilles	Cochrane South / -Sud	ND	deputy New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Boushy, Dave	Sarnia	PC	
Boyd, Marion	London Centre / -Centre	ND	
Bradley, James J.	St Catharines	L	deputy opposition leader, opposition House leader / chef adjoint de l'opposition, chef parlementaire de l'opposition
Brown, Jim	Scarborough West / -Ouest	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Correctional Services / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Services correctionnels
Brown, Michael A.	Algoma-Manitoulin	L	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Caplan, David	Oriole	L	
Carr, Gary	Oakville South / -Sud	PC	
Carroll, Jack	Chatham-Kent	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Castrilli, Annamarie	Downsview	L	
Christopherson, David	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	ND	
Chudleigh, Ted	Halton North / -Nord	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Richesses naturelles
Churley, Marilyn	Riverdale	ND	Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Présidente de la Chambre et Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Cleary, John C.	Cornwall	L	
Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony	Brampton South / -Sud	PC	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Colle, Mike	Oakwood	L	
Conway, Sean G.	Renfrew North / -Nord	L	
Cordiano, Joseph	Lawrence	L	
Crozier, Bruce	Essex South / -Sud	L	
Cullen, Alex	Ottawa West / -Ouest	L	
Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne	London North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Curling, Alvin	Scarborough North / -Nord	L	deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Danford, Harry	Hastings-Peterborough	PC	parliamentary assistant (Agriculture and Food) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire (secteurs Agriculture et Alimentation) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
DeFaria, Carl	Mississauga East / -Est	PC	
Doyle, Ed	Wentworth East / -Est	PC	deputy government whip / whip adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Dwight	Windsor-Walkerville	L	
Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet	Durham West / -Ouest	PC	Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Elliott, Brenda	Guelph	PC	
Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L.	Parry Sound	PC	Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances
Fisher, Barbara	Bruce	PC	parliamentary assistant (Rural Affairs) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjointe parlementaire (secteur Affaires rurales) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim	Durham Centre / -Centre	PC	Minister of Labour, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / ministre du Travail, solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Ford, Douglas B.	Etobicoke-Humber	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Fox, Gary	Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox-Hastings-Sud	PC	
Froese, Tom	St Catharines-Brock	PC	parliamentary assistant (Colleges and Universities) to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire (secteur collèges et universités) du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Galt, Doug	Northumberland	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de l'Environnement
Gerretsen, John	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	L	chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Gilchrist, Steve	Scarborough East / -Est	PC	parliamentary assistant (Municipal affairs – urban) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur urbain) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Grandmaître, Bernard	Ottawa East / -Est	L	
Gravelle, Michael	Port Arthur	L	
Grimmett, Bill	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire du président du Conseil de gestion
Guzzo, Garry J.	Ottawa-Rideau	PC	
Hampton, Howard	Rainy River	ND	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie	Oxford	PC	parliamentary assistant (Municipal affairs – rural) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur rural) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles	Willowdale	PC	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D.	Nipissing	PC	Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
Hastings, John	Etobicoke-Rexdale	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Transports
Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris	Victoria-Haliburton	PC	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines, deputy government House leader / Président du Conseil de gestion, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, vice-leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Hoy, Pat	Essex-Kent	L	
Hudak, Tim	Niagara South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre de la Santé
Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron	Burlington South / -Sud	PC	Minister without Portfolio (Seniors Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (affaires des personnes âgées)

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Johns, Helen	Huron	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / adjointe parlementaire du ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Johnson, Bert	Perth	PC	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Johnson, Hon / L'hon David	Don Mills	PC	Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Johnson, Ron	Brantford	PC	
Jordan, W. Leo	Lanark-Renfrew	PC	parliamentary assistant (Tourism) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Tourisme) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Kells, Morley	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	PC	
Kennedy, Gerard	York South / -Sud	L	
Klees, Frank	York-Mackenzie	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Kormos, Peter	Welland-Thorold	ND	
Kwinter, Monte	Wilson Heights	L	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	L	
Lankin, Frances	Beaches-Woodbine	ND	chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Leach, Hon / L'hon Al	St George-St David	PC	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Leadston, Gary L.	Kitchener-Wilmot	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Lessard, Wayne	Windsor-Riverside	ND	
Marchese, Rosario	Fort York	ND	
Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret	Mississauga South / -Sud	PC	Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Martel, Shelley	Sudbury East / -Est	ND	
Martin, Tony	Sault Ste Marie	ND	deputy New Democratic Party whip / whip adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Martiniuk, Gerry	Cambridge	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire du procureur général
Maves, Bart	Niagara Falls	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire du ministre du Travail
McGuinty, Dalton	Ottawa South / -Sud	L	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
McLean, Allan K.	Simcoe East / -Est	PC	
McLeod, Lyn	Fort William	L	
Miclash, Frank	Kenora	L	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Morin, Gilles E.	Carleton East / -Est	L	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Munro, Julia	Durham-York	PC	
Murdoch, Bill	Grey-Owen Sound	PC	
Mushinski, Marilyn	Scarborough-Ellesmere	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjointe parlementaire du premier ministre
Newman, Dan	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre de la Santé
North, Peter	Elgin	Ind	
O'Toole, John R.	Durham East / -Est	PC	
Ouellette, Jerry J.	Oshawa	PC	
Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al	York Centre / -Centre	PC	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Parker, John L.	York East / -Est	PC	parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for native affairs / adjoint parlementaire du ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Patten, Richard	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	L	
Pettit, Trevor	Hamilton Mountain	PC	

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Phillips, Gerry	Scarborough-Agincourt	L	
Pouliot, Gilles	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	ND	
Preston, Peter L.	Brant-Haldimand	PC	
Pupatello, Sandra	Windsor-Sandwich	L	
Ramsay, David	Timiskaming	L	
Rollins, E.J. Douglas	Quinte	PC	
Ross, Lillian	Hamilton West / -Ouest	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / adjointe parlementaire du ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Runciman, Robert W.	Leeds-Grenville	PC	
Ruprecht, Tony	Parkdale	L	
Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob	Mississauga West / -Ouest	PC	Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (Privatisation)
Saunderson, William	Eglinton	PC	
Sergio, Mario	Yorkview	L	
Shea, Derwyn	High Park-Swansea	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Affaires civiles, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Sheehan, Frank	Lincoln	PC	
Silipo, Tony	Dovercourt	ND	deputy New Democratic Party leader / chef adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Skarica, Toni	Wentworth North / -Nord	PC	
Smith, Bruce	Middlesex	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John	Mississauga North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Spina, Joseph	Brampton North / -Nord	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire du ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W.	Carleton	PC	Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Stewart, R. Gary	Peterborough	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris	Etobicoke West / -Ouest	PC	Speaker / Président
Tascona, Joseph N.	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	PC	
Tilson, David	Dufferin-Peel	PC	
Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H.	Markham	PC	Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David	York Mills	PC	Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement
Vankoughnet, Bill	Frontenac-Addington	PC	
Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble	S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	PC	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones
Wettlaufer, Wayne	Kitchener	PC	
Wildman, Bud	Algoma	ND	New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim	Simcoe West / -Ouest	PC	Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth	Waterloo North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Wood, Bob	London South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General / adjoint parlementaire du solliciteur général
Wood, Len	Cochrane North / -Nord	ND	
Young, Terence H.	Halton Centre / -Centre	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Finances
Vacant	Nickel Belt		

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Mushinski, Peter North, Gilles Pouliot, Joseph N. Tascona
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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Trevor Pettit
Dominic Agostino, Marcel Beaubien, Douglas B. Ford,
Helen Johns, Allan K. McLean, Trevor Pettit,
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Clerk / Greffier: Tom Prins

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Marcel Beaubien, Bernard Grandmaître, Bill Grimmett,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Shelley Martel, Richard Patten,
Peter L. Preston, Joseph N. Tascona, Terence H. Young
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

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Toby Barrett, Dave Boushy, David Caplan,
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Clerk / Greffier: Viktor Kaczkowski

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Chair / Présidente: Brenda Elliott
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Peter L. Preston
David Christopherson, Ted Chudleigh, Sean G. Conway,
Brenda Elliott, Doug Galt, John Hastings, Pat Hoy,
Bart Maves, Peter L. Preston
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Social development / Affaires sociales

Chair / Présidente: Annamarie Castrilli
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Dwight Duncan
Marion Boyd, Jack Carroll, Annamarie Castrilli,
Dwight Duncan, Tim Hudak, Frank Klees,
Lyn McLeod, Lillian Ross, Bruce Smith
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

These lists appear in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month. A list arranged by riding appears when space permits.

Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 1 June 1998

Lundi 1^{er} juin 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 June 1998

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 16, An Act to give Tax Relief to Small Businesses, Charities and Others and to make other amendments respecting the Financing of Local Government and Schools, when Bill 16 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill, without further debate or amendment; and at such time, the bill shall be referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs;

That the standing committee on finance and economic affairs shall be authorized to meet to consider the bill on Wednesday, June 3, 1998, from 9 am to 12 noon, and that the committee shall be authorized to meet for the purposes of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill on that same day following routine proceedings until the completion of clause-by-clause consideration;

That, pursuant to standing order 74(d), the Chair of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs shall establish the deadline for the tabling of amendments or for filing them with the clerk of the standing committee;

That, at 4:30 pm on June 3, 1998, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any divisions required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a);

That the committee shall report the bill to the House on June 4, 1998. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the date provided, the bill shall be deemed to have been passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House;

That upon receiving the report of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, the Speaker shall put

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1^{er} juin 1998

the question for adoption of the report forthwith and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That one sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At 5:55 pm or 9:25 pm, as the case may be, on such day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That the vote on third reading of the bill may, at the request of any chief whip of a recognized party in the House, be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding "Deferred Votes"; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceeding on the bill, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Mr Johnson has moved motion 15. I know that you'd like me to read it.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Debate?

Hon David Johnson: I will be sharing my time with the member for Nepean, the member for Halton Centre and the member for Northumberland, with the member for Nepean leading off.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This is going to be very important debate and I'm anxious to hear from the government side. I think there should be quorum here for it, though.

The Acting Speaker: Would you check, please, if we have quorum.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nepean.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I'm very pleased to rise and to have the opportunity to speak to this important motion. What this motion will seek to do is to refer this bill to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs so that we can get a number of groups on the record on this bill, in addition to allowing for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, but then as well to try to do this part of the legislative process, to make a decision. This House will have the opportunity to decide on this bill because it is an extremely important piece of legislation.

There has been a tremendous amount of discussion on property tax reform in this place over the last year to a year and a half.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): That was 106.

Mr Baird: Bill 106 was the first bill that dealt with property tax reform in Ontario. It went through first reading, second reading and had three or four days' debate and then went through eight days of committee hearings and one day of clause-by-clause. We had the opportunity to travel to Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Chatham and Port Colborne and heard from 99 oral submissions. That was the significant piece of legislation with respect to property tax reform, something that has been needed for a good amount of time, and this bill on property tax reform continues along that line.

We also had Bill 149, on which time was spent not only at first reading, but at second reading it was debated for a period of three or four days and then it was referred to committee where there were four days of hearings, in addition to a day of clause-by-clause. We heard from a significant number of groups that came and appeared before the committee and gave their opinions to this House. We have the benefit of those submissions and arguments that we were able to hear and amend the bill. As usual, this government —

Mr Martin: Another one you screwed up, John.

Mr Wildman: Nobody has prolonged debate on this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Members of the third party, you're not too many, but you're making lots of noise. I would ask you to refrain from making noise. Member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: We had a terrific amount of discussion on property tax reform over the first session of this Parliament and, since then, we've had the opportunity to have even more debate in this place, and throughout that process the government has always been prepared to listen and to learn.

I have one quote on that very issue, and it doesn't come from John Baird, it doesn't come from a Progressive Conservative member of the Legislative Assembly, it comes from a long-serving member of this assembly. When we were debating Bill 16 at second reading, one member interjected in the debate and said, "Of course, I will give this government some credit: They listened." That was the Liberal member for Parkdale, Mr Ruprecht. He acknowledged, very wisely I think, that this government has taken the time to listen and to bring forward legislation based on those consultations. For those people who want to check the record, they can check Hansard, page 651, and they can find the Liberal member for Parkdale's quotes on this issue.

This government is certainly committed to creating an environment where small businesses can grow, thrive and create jobs. That's why it's important we have the opportunity to take this piece of legislation to committee and get it to be considered in its final form by the Legislature.

We've heard and responded to the concerns of two groups particularly with respect to this piece of legislation,

the first being small business, which is really the economic engine of the Ontario economy. We've heard the concerns of small business and we've watched small business. We've seen them create 82% of the jobs in Ontario. I know I've seen that in my home community, where you see retail sales are up, where you see the home building industry is doing extremely well and the value of construction permits issued by the city of Nepean has gone up considerably.

1840

We've also listened to charities. We listened to the concerns that both small business and charities brought forward when they gave us some examples where they were facing large property tax increases. We responded through Bill 16, the Small Business and Charities Protection Act.

We listened to the concerns of a variety of stakeholders, as I mentioned, in the extensive amount of debate held in this place and in committee on Bill 106 and Bill 149, which were some pretty fundamental reforms to our property tax system.

Since the announcement of the measures contained in Bill 16 on March 27, the Minister of Finance and his officials within the Ministry of Finance have consulted extensively with businesses, municipalities and charities in order to design a bill that meets their needs. The new measures that are introduced in Bill 16 are in response to the feedback we received as a government and as legislators from municipalities, from small businesses and from charities.

While it's important to implement these measures quickly in order to give the municipalities across the province more time to plan their affairs accordingly, this government is dedicated to consultation and to listening. We will be able to get a few groups further to the extensive consultations on Bill 106 and Bill 149 on the record and to listen to those concerns and have the opportunity to see the manifestation of that listening during the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

We're keeping our promise to protect small business from large property tax increases. Bill 16 gives municipalities the tools to limit property tax increases to 2.5% a year in each of the next three years. To ensure that all small businesses can be protected, the 2.5% limit would also apply to businesses that lease their premises. For example, this could include an office building, shopping centres and industrial malls.

Small businesses create more jobs than any other sector, and this government recognizes the importance that small businesses and the small business sector have played, and continue to play, in the economic recovery in Ontario and the economic turnaround that we've seen over the past three years in the province. Small businesses are creating more jobs than any other sector. This government recognizes that small business plays, and must continue to play, an important role in turning around the economy of the province.

This proposed legislation is in keeping with other measures that have been taken to ensure that small

businesses in the province of Ontario continue to thrive. In our latest budget we announced a whole series of measures designed to assist small businesses which Bill 16, as a piece of legislation coming from the Ministry of Finance, is designed to complement. We're looking at a whole host of initiatives allowing small businesses to get access to capital through the creation of the community small business investment fund and by encouraging loans at low interest rates. We also announced that we will establish a network of enterprise centres for small businesses in order to provide coaching and mentoring, business planning, marketing, accounting and overall business strategy.

It's extremely important to get out from the walls at Queen's Park, to get out and talk to small business in local communities. I was pleased to have the member for Wellington, the parliamentary assistant for small business, take the time to come to Nepean and meet with a group of about 40 or 50 small business people to hear their concerns and to take those concerns back to discussions with our colleagues at Queen's Park. That was certainly a productive consultation.

Bill 16 also makes protection for charities mandatory. We recognize the valuable work of charities and want to provide municipalities with the tools to assist them. I suspect a good number of other members of the House were visited by charities in their constituencies. I had a visit from Greg Joy, the director of the Ottawa Food Bank, and he made a very strong and persuasive case, as I know representatives from other charities across the province did to their members of provincial Parliament. This past February and March, a number of members of the government caucus held a number of conference calls and meetings to ensure that those concerns were heard by the decision-makers here at Queen's Park, and Bill 16 is a manifestation of those consultations. Bill 16 is important. It makes assisting charities mandatory and not optional, which I think is an important part to recognize.

Charities occupying business properties would also be protected by the 2.5% limit, and when municipalities do not apply the 2.5% limit, registered charities must receive mandatory rebates of at least 40% and up to 100% of their property taxes. That's to ensure that charities in Ontario are not negatively impacted by the move to ensure greater fairness in property taxes and property tax reforms. That's an important and useful example where the government did listen and respond to what we heard. The province will share the cost of the rebates that I mentioned with respect to the business education tax, in that regard. Owners of commercial, industrial and multiresidential properties would also be protected by the 2.5% limit.

This piece of legislation, Bill 16, fulfils our government's commitment to ensure fair tax treatment of landlords, and this legislation would give municipalities additional power to make tax changes fairly in ways that meet local priorities. These powers include graduated tax rates for industrial properties, four new optional property classes, extended powers to phase in tax changes, and

rebates on tax increases for commercial and industrial properties.

We recognize it is essential that this bill become law as soon as possible so that the province can return the assessment rolls to the municipalities, thereby permitting municipalities to set their final tax bills and to manage their cash flow. To help municipalities manage their affairs, we're allowing local councils more time to assess and implement the tools aimed at protecting particularly small businesses and charities, those measures contained in Bill 16, and extending the deadline for municipalities to appeal their assessments to July 31, 1998.

The province will be consulting with municipalities with respect to the fiscal effect of the extension of the return of the assessment rolls to the municipalities. This legislation would allow the government, if necessary, to advance funds to school boards in lieu of the second instalment of education taxes paid by municipalities to school boards. Municipalities would then be required to reimburse the province at a later date. This is important in terms of the implementation of these types of measures, that the government is there to listen and to ensure that we can act to meet the needs of municipalities, our partners in local government.

This piece of legislation is designed first and foremost with the goal of trying to assist small businesses in the province. As I mentioned earlier, we on this side of the House recognize the important role that small businesses play. That's why in the recent budget, complementing these measures we had a whole host of measures particularly with respect to small business.

One would reduce the corporate income tax paid by small businesses over the next eight years by 50%. That's a significant tax reduction and one that is extremely important, that small businesses be encouraged to thrive. There is legislation before this House that would phase in that tax cut, going from 9.5% to 4.75% over the next eight years. Small businesses would have the certainty of that legislation being passed by this House in terms of making their decisions, in terms of capital investment or expansion, and even to start a small business, which we think is certainly productive. I know in my community small business is a big creator of employment.

We've also taken measures such as reductions of the employer health tax. We've eliminated, effective July 1, with legislation before the House, the employer health tax for small businesses with a payroll of under \$400,000. The worst thing about a payroll tax is when you punish a company, particularly a small business, for taking on more employees. We want to make it as easy as possible for small businesses in Ontario to hire new workers and new employees, and the measures contained in the recent budget do just that, complementing the measures in Bill 16.

I can just imagine if we could have all levels of government paddling together. If we could have the federal government recognize the terrible effect of payroll taxes on particularly small business and on working families across the province, that would do a tremendous amount to

help unleash the power of small business and the power of job creation in the province of Ontario, because the unemployment insurance payroll tax —

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): It's a tax on jobs.

1850

Mr Baird: It's a tax on jobs, as the member for Halton North says. It's one that causes us a terrific concern when the payroll tax is now at \$2.80 per \$100 of payroll and the chief actuary of the federal Department of Finance says that they could reduce it to \$2.20. The government of Ontario has said, "Listen, reduce it to \$2.20 because that's what is needed to fund the reserve." We're going to see by the end of this year an accumulated surplus of almost \$20 billion. Where does that come from? It comes disproportionately from taxpayers, workers and small businesses in Ontario.

Mr Chudleigh: And entry level.

Mr Baird: Entry-level positions, the member for Halton North says. Indeed.

It has a particularly negative effect on low- and middle-income Ontarians, and we are calling on the federal Minister of Finance to join Ontario in helping small business and bringing in more tax fairness. That is something that is extremely important. If they could do that, could you just imagine the effect that would have on job creation and on small businesses in Ontario?

We listened very closely to Sherry Cooper, the senior vice-president and chief economist for Nesbitt Burns. She came before the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and said there were a number of reasons the Ontario economy was doing very well. She of course highlighted the situation in the United States and the low interest rates, but she also said very clearly that the positive environment for investment in Ontario created by the current Ontario government was very key and very central to that. The chief economic issue that she identified as being helpful to economic growth in Ontario was the tax cuts, that the tax cuts were helping to create jobs in the economy.

Those aren't jobs created by the government of Ontario; those are jobs created by small businesses and by enterprises across the province, where people are spending more of their own money in their communities. We're seeing a tremendous benefit from that. Cutting taxes is bringing greater tax fairness, just like Bill 16 is designed to ensure that small businesses are treated fairly in property tax reform. So if we can convince Paul Martin and the federal Liberal government to stop gouging the Ontario worker and stop gouging small business in Ontario, we would be doing very well indeed.

I was very hopeful when the Minister of Finance not too long ago made a statement with respect to taxes. I paid very close attention and I even kept it here to present to you. The *Toronto Sun* said not too long ago, "Martin Admits Taxes Too High." We thought that if the federal Liberal government was admitting that taxes are too high, they would listen to small business and listen to hard-working families in the province and would be able to

respond to that. But protection particularly for small business, while it's contained in Bill 16, simply isn't contained in the recent measures by the federal government.

Mr Martin said, "Obviously I think (taxes) are (too high)...." The article went on further to say: "Nor would the finance minister choose between investing in government programs like health care or offering Canadians tax cuts." I think we should have both, but with the recent federal Liberal budget, what we've seen is one half but not the other, where they're starting to crank up more spending within Ontario; at the same time, the election is over, they'll put tax cuts aside. What that would do for small business would be absolutely amazing.

I think our unemployment rate is still too high. In my community, unemployment not too long ago was 10.8%; it has come down to 7.1%, but we've got to continue to work hard to see that drop further. In other parts of the province, unemployment remains high. That's why we need to continue pursuing pro-growth, pro-job-creation policies, and providing fairness for small business is a very big part of it.

Property tax reform is very important. The member for Parkdale gave a very interesting speech and I paid close attention to it. He talked about how all the restaurants along Steeles Avenue were on one side of the street. I'm from Nepean, Steeles Avenue being here in the greater Toronto area, and I wondered why. It's because the restaurants on one side of the street are in one municipality and the properties across the street are in another. Because of the inequitable tax treatment, it basically said: "Don't start a business here. Don't start to create any jobs in this community." That's a tremendous concern, and successive governments of all parties have let this go on for too long.

The previous Progressive Conservative government in the 1970s and early 1980s regrettably did not address this issue.

The provincial Liberals were elected in 1985 and they had a plan to bring in property tax fairness for Toronto. Do you know what that plan was? The plan was the commercial concentration tax. Instead of allowing the inequity to continue, they just whacked, and they whacked Toronto particularly hard. It was a tax that was so bad that Tony Silipo and the NDP got rid of it. When the member for Dovercourt is getting rid of taxes, you know it's a very bad tax. Our colleagues in the New Democratic Party — Mr Silipo, Mr Marchese, Ms Churley, the members opposite — wanted to get rid of that tax because it was a tremendous disincentive to job creation.

Interjection.

Mr Baird: As the member for Niagara South said, it killed jobs. We know that one part of the province can't do well —

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Was Jim Bradley here then?

Mr Baird: Was the member for St Catharines here then? I bet you he voted for that tax. That hurt small business. That's why this motion on time allocation is designed to get Bill 16 passed so we can begin to help

reform the property tax system and ensure that it's fair, particularly for small businesses and for charities.

When I was in my constituency in Nepean on the weekend, on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, I was able to meet with a lot of constituents. Taxes remain a very big issue.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Weren't you in London at the Reform convention?

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Baird: I was in my riding all weekend in Nepean and I know the terrific amount of priority that taxpayers in Nepean accord to not just taxes but property taxes in particular.

With respect to the situation in the greater Toronto area, the member for Yorkview said, "What is this government doing?" This government is seeking to not sit by and watch education taxes spiral out of control. They went up by more than 8% a year under the Liberal years by school boards that couldn't stop taxing. This government has stepped in to freeze the taxes.

The concern that had for the inequities around the province with respect to commercial-industrial taxes for education was considerable. That's why another measure particularly to help small business contained in the budget presented in this place more than a month ago was to bring the commercial-industrial education tax rate down to the current provincial average over the next eight years. That is contained in legislation that will be considered by this House on another day. That will help small business. In my community, that will bring one of the taxes down by 12%, and that will bring a bit of fairness.

I know it will also bring in greater tax fairness for Hamilton-Wentworth. The member for Wentworth East will know about that tax fairness for Hamilton-Wentworth, and that's an important part of making sure the taxes are fair. That's a \$550-million tax cut designed to help the job creation industry in the province of Ontario, because far too many small businesses simply couldn't compete because of the inequitable tax treatment that had been there and that had developed for many, many years. Bill 16 will further help ensure fairness in that process.

There is a significant amount that I could go on with respect to this piece of legislation. It not only allows local municipalities to limit property tax increases to no more than 2.5% for each of the next three years for commercial-industrial and multiresidential properties; it applies graduated tax rates for the industrial property class similar to the graduated tax rates for the commercial property class so that lower tax rates can be applied to smaller businesses.

It applies four new optional property classes — shopping centre, office building, parking lot/vacant land and large industrial — provides a phase-in of all tax change related to property tax reform over an eight-year period, and provides rebates to business properties in need of further protection. Those are some important parts of this piece of legislation.

The government could have just simply said: "Listen, this is inequitable. This is a bad tax system. We should just leave it as it is and allow the jobs to continue to be killed in this province." But we said no, it was wrong to sit by and do nothing while jobs and small businesses were being hurt in the province of Ontario. That's something that is not an easy decision, because change is never easy. There's no system with respect to any tax that is universally popular in the province. What we want to do is to seek greater fairness. We've tried to do that with a whole host of changes, whether it's the property tax changes contained in this piece of legislation, Bill 16, or whether it's trying to reduce personal income tax to allow hardworking families, taxpayers, in Longfields, Davidson Heights and Barrhaven, in all parts of Nepean and across the province, to keep more of their own hard-earned dollars.

1900

The relationship between tax fairness and tax cuts is considerable. The member for Halton Centre will know that the previous NDP government raised income taxes and brought in less money. In fact when they raised them, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt stood in this House and said, "This is going to kill 100,000 jobs." Regrettably, 100,000 jobs were killed by those tax increases. They increased the personal income tax rate from 54% to 58% and actually brought in less money.

But to give them credit, in 1990 they were honest with the taxpayers of Ontario. They promised to raise taxes and that was one promise the NDP government fulfilled. They promised to raise taxes and they did. I admire them for having the honesty to put those legitimate alternatives before the people, and in that election they were rewarded for that.

Conversely this party, when we were on the other side of the Legislature, voted against the \$4 billion or \$5 billion in tax increases brought in by the previous government? Why? Because we thought they were wrong. We thought they would kill jobs. We thought the government didn't need to dig deep into taxpayers' pockets, that people who worked for that paycheck had the right to maintain as much of that paycheck to help raise their families. We voted against the \$4-billion or \$5-billion tax increase and we're getting rid of it, which is consistency, much like the NDP today is being consistent. They disagree with the personal income tax reduction and they've put forward a proposal to take part of it back. I respect them for that, for putting forward a plan I disagree with profoundly, but I cannot do anything but admire their consistency and their seeking to be honest with the electorate of Ontario.

Sometimes, though, political parties don't want to be as upfront as they perhaps should be. I can remember that after the last provincial election one member of this place said, "We've been far too fuzzy for far too long."

Mr Wildman: Who?

Mr Baird: Who? the member for Algoma asks. "We've been far too fuzzy for far too long." Are there any guesses on who might have said that? The member for Windsor-Walkerville said that. Further: "We're going to

have to some day decide what we stand for and then stand for it. We have some serious navel-gazing to do." That's not a Conservative member. That's not John Baird or Terence Young or Derwyn Shea. That is the Liberal member for Windsor-Walkerville saying that his own party should take more substantive positions, and that's extremely important. That's Mr Duncan, my good friend and colleague. That's what he said and it's something important.

Do you know what other Liberal members said? They said, "How can we go on in, guns ablazing, when we would have been doing the same thing?" Do you know who said that? That was the member for Windsor-Sandwich, Mrs Papatello. After the election she said that the Liberal Party had to seriously weigh whether it could come into this House and blow up on command because, in her judgement, "We would have been doing the same thing." That's what she said back in 1995 when this House reconvened. She acknowledged that much of the red book was similar to this government's agenda, but they backed away from the campaign promises no sooner than the lawn signs had gone into someone's garage or basement.

Mr Chudleigh: They must be Liberals.

Mr Baird: "They must be Liberals," the member for Halton North said, and that is something that is extremely important, that type of consistency.

There's broad-spread agreement that the tax system in Ontario needed to be reformed and I think this government deserves the credit for beginning to address those initiatives. Why do we want tax fairness like Bill 16? Why do we want tax cuts like the economic agenda of Ontario?

Mr Wildman: Why do you want to do it in such a hurry?

Mr Baird: Why do we want to do it in such a hurry? Because we want to create jobs in a hurry.

Mr Wildman: Why do you have to bring in closure?

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member for Algoma, I don't want to repeat it. Please.

Mr Baird: We want to create jobs in a hurry because far too many people are unemployed and economic growth hasn't been high enough. We want to create jobs. We want more headlines like this one from the front page of the Nepean Clarion in a story written by James Ness, then associate editor. The headline is "Five Thousand Jobs Coming to City of Nepean." This is the kind of announcement we want to see. We want a competitive tax structure, because in the high-tech industry income taxes are a real disincentive. We have a lot of high-tech graduates going south of the border to Seattle, Washington, where there's no state income tax. Our competitiveness to keep these bright minds is extremely important and that's why the tax rates are important, because there are many young people who might get an offer from Nortel —

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): Microsoft.

Mr Baird: — and as the member for Niagara South said, they might get a competing offer from Microsoft. I know of one such individual from my constituency, who got an offer of \$65,000 in Seattle, Washington, compared

to \$45,000 here, plus a very generous share offering. The biggest reason: the tax rate. So we've got to ensure that we're competitive, keeping in mind that we have a good health care system, and that's an important part, but having a fair tax system is extremely important to economic development and economic growth. Bill 16 is very much part of that agenda.

Based on what we've heard during our extensive consultation, back both to Bill 106 and Bill 149 and in our current discussions both before and after some of the measures contained in this piece of legislation, Bill 16, we believe this bill will help address the concerns of small businesses and charities, two very important sectors in Ontario.

I am pleased to yield a portion of my time to the member for Halton Centre.

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): Since 1995 our government has worked hard to reduce the tax burden on individuals and families in Ontario. We're close to accomplishing our goal of a 30% personal income tax cut six months ahead of schedule, on July 1, just one month away from today, when Ontario will have the lowest personal income tax in Canada.

We have also worked hard to create a more open, competitive environment for small businesses so they can germinate and grow. We have untangled much of the bureaucratic red tape that bound small business owners, and we have made it easier for entrepreneurs to set up shop and build their future along with the future of their employees.

Between February 1997 and February 1998 small business created 82% of the net new jobs in Ontario. That's 217,000 net new jobs created by small business.

In this bill, we're focused on ways to support these Ontarians who own and operate small businesses, which are employing so many who need those jobs.

In our budget we announced 36 new tax cuts, for a total of 66 since we took office June 8, 1995.

These tax cuts are bolstering personal freedom and security and encouraging the growth of small business, that 82% that are responsible for some of the more than 22,000 new jobs last month alone.

We also proposed to eliminate the employer health tax for 88% of Ontario private sector employers and recently announced that we will bring the tax cut forward six months ahead of schedule.

We've introduced legislation to cut the small business corporations tax rate in half, to 4.75%, the lowest rate in Canada, over the next eight years.

We are working to ensure an eight-year plan to reduce commercial and industrial education tax rates in municipalities where these tax rates are above the provincial average. But we also need to ensure that the effects of these tax cut are not mitigated or cancelled by property tax increases due to the modernization of property assessments under the Ontario fair assessment system. The Small Business and Charities Protection Act, 1998, will help our municipal partners prevent that from happening.

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This act is born from the many consultations we held in the months preceding this session of Parliament with small business owners, municipal leaders and the volunteers and staff representing our charities. I held such consultations in my own riding with Ted Arnott, the member for Wellington and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. We met with small business owners in Halton and I'm pleased to say I learned a lot about the unique set of challenges that are before the small business person today. Like my colleagues, I brought their views forward to our government.

We know they need government to ease up. They told us they want to stop increased taxes by four and sometimes five levels of government. We realize that the Ontario fair assessment system, while long overdue and necessary to level the playing field for property owners, creates tax shifts in some areas such as older neighbourhoods where properties haven't been reassessed for many years.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): It's a concern to Toronto.

Mr Young: A big concern.

We know that some small businesses would be among the hardest hit.

Through the Small Business and Charities Protection Act, we will give tax relief to small businesses and charities by giving municipalities tools to protect them. Under this proposed legislation municipalities will be able to implement property tax reform fairly, with an eye to local needs, by allowing them to limit property tax increases to 2.5% a year for three years.

This means the hardworking business people, the owners of businesses in many neighbourhoods that make up this great city of Toronto and many of our other cities and towns: someone who owns a photography studio on Bloor Street West, or a family who owns a retail store on Yonge Street, perhaps a family-run dry cleaner like the one we use in Oakville. These people should all have the potential to receive the special protection they need to survive and grow.

Our government recognizes that these are the valued, familiar services close to home from people we've come to trust, an essential part of the fabric of our communities and, frankly, the lifeblood of our economy. They exemplify hard work and what it means to make your own way, providing valuable goods and services to others and stirring up the economic life in our towns and our cities. These are the people who have invested their lives and their savings in their businesses. They've created jobs, contributed to the economy and helped to keep competition alive in Ontario.

I'm happy to say that this legislation gives them an opportunity to continue to operate in a climate of stability and of predictability.

We have also recognized the need to provide mandatory protection for registered charities. We've done this in two ways. If the municipalities choose to apply the 2.5% limit to property tax increases, registered charities that

own or rent business properties will be protected that way. If the municipalities choose not to apply the 2.5% limit, then they must give those registered charities rebates of a minimum of 40% of their property tax. But municipalities also have the option to rebate up to 100% of the property taxes to charities occupying business properties and extend rebates to other charitable and not-for-profit organizations.

In recognition of their selflessly helping others and working to benefit society, while often experiencing financial hardship themselves, our government will help ensure that high property taxes don't prevent them from continuing the great work they do. Organizations including those that advocate children's rights, those that provide quality day care, those that work to prevent cruelty to animals and environmental organizations, are among those registered charities that will receive mandatory protection from major property tax increases under this proposed act.

Frankly in most cases, who knows better which charities and non-profit organizations deserve a break? The level of government closest to them: the municipalities. The fact is that charitable and non-profit work in our communities is as essential to our civilization as any business or government organization. They deserve to be nurtured and supported.

Our government understands the importance of working with our municipal partners to make tax changes work. That means giving them flexibility to respond to the needs of their local businesses and charities and the time to implement these measures. Our municipal partners will now be more free to build their communities and neighbourhoods, to support a local economic and social structure that is sound. The Small Business and Charities Protection Act empowers and enables local government to create a tax environment for small business, charitable organizations and communities to thrive.

Mr Galt: Thank you for the opportunity to speak in the time allocation motion so we can get on with Bill 16, get it to hearings and get on to third reading — a very important budget bill indeed.

I was speaking last week on Bill 22 and there was some concern from the opposition that it was only a two-page bill and that there wasn't very much to speak on and address. I'm sure they're very happy with this one. There are some 73 pages, and there's quite a bit of content here, things from capping of taxes to rebates to charities to gross leases and flowing through of taxes, phase-in of the 1998 assessment-related tax changes, requisitions under the Education Act, connections with transition ratios, etc. I'm sure the opposition is much, much happier with a thicker bill such as this one.

This bill is really about small business and giving them a break. I can tell you it's way past due to give them a break.

Mr Baird: They deserve it.

Mr Galt: As the member for Nepean says, they certainly deserve a break. It's the small businesses in this country that basically create — I was going to say most if

not all — certainly 80 some per cent of the jobs that are created in this country.

It's unfortunate that four out of five new small businesses go bankrupt in the first five years. Just imagine if we could save one of those out of five in every five years. We would have three out of five instead of four out of five. Imagine the number of people that would employ and the number of jobs it would create in the province of Ontario.

Why do they go under? Why do they get in trouble? They're in trouble because of taxation. Taxation is the number one reason for bankruptcy in this country. I'm sure the opposition would understand that, with all the tax increases they created, the members of the third party. They have got us to the point where Canada is now the world champion of taxation, particularly of property tax and of wealth tax, and that isn't a very enviable record to hold at all. It's very unenviable, just to re-emphasize there.

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Businesses in this country consume approximately a third of the municipal services, but at the same time they pay some two thirds of the property tax. Over and above that, they pay extra for garbage collection, telephone rates, electrical rates and so on.

Members of the third party commonly refer to business owners as the rich: "They can afford it. No problem." That just isn't so. According to Stats Canada, the entrepreneurs of this country make \$15,000 less per household and work some 13 hours more per week than the average employee whom they hire. Many of these people running small businesses — I did for some eight years in general practice — live well below the poverty line. They are required to pay minimum wage, but they earn less themselves.

The real problem is that it doesn't matter how well the business does or where they're at, whether they're in trouble or whether they make a profit; they have to pay that property tax. There's just absolutely no excuse whatsoever. It doesn't matter whether they're a fledgling business just trying to get started, with little profit. These taxes often are very unfair. This is the very group we're asking to create all the new jobs and the wealth in this country.

I see the NDP ready to demonstrate with almost every group, but I don't see them demonstrating for the entrepreneurs, the small business people of this province.

I thought it was intriguing, and I mentioned it this afternoon when we were speaking about post-secondary education, that at the last NDP convention they came out with this brilliant idea of free tuition for anybody and everybody who wants to go to university, but the interesting part of that convention is that they voted against coming out with the total cost of the goodies package they were putting together. No wonder that during their term in government we ended up borrowing so much money and doubling the debt.

Some 70% of the firms in this country are small businesses employing fewer than five employees. Bill 16 recognizes the tremendous importance of small business

being vibrant. If they're not vibrant, neither is Canada and neither is the province of Ontario.

Since we took office we've made many changes to try and help small business, and indeed small business has been helped, as I'm hearing on the street corners in Campbellford, Warkworth, Port Hope and Brighton. They are extremely pleased with the changes we've made to the income tax, cutting their income taxes, eliminating the annual business filing fees, and the red tape we've gotten rid of to help them.

Above all, they are pleased to see the employer health tax disappearing, particularly since it's been moved up from January 1, 1999, to July 1, 1998. We will eliminate all of the employer health tax for any payroll under \$400,000. This was an extremely regressive tax, as I'm sure the member for St Catharines will remember, when they brought it in in 1989; the old tax-and-spend Liberal government that he was very familiar with when he sat as the Minister of the Environment at that time. I'm sure he struggled and that it really bothered him when they brought in that tax. This government is eliminating the employer health tax to help those small businesses that have five or fewer employees.

There is absolutely no question that payroll taxes discourage business, small businesses in particular, from hiring new employees. That's what we've been talking about: jobs, jobs, jobs. The employer health tax was the one that was known as the job killer. It was very high on our "most wanted" list and we moved to reduce and eliminate it just as soon as we possibly could. Come next year, I'm very pleased to be able to say that 80% of the businesses in Ontario will no longer be paying the employer health tax.

Bill 16 also provides municipalities with additional tools to help to protect small business, and reaffirms our commitment to small business.

Both the Liberals and the NDP are great at talking the talk, but they don't walk the walk as well. As a matter of fact, this morning down at the corner of Yonge and Bloor — the Liberals and the NDP were invited to join, and thank heavens, the leader of the NDP did show up with some of his staff, but none of the Liberals came, after being invited twice to help open Toronto Bike Week. Today was the kickoff, with cycling from that corner down to Nathan Phillips Square.

I really don't understand why the Liberals wouldn't have joined in and taken part to emblematically promote cycling so that we can reduce some of the air pollution that comes from our cars. I would have taken for granted that they would have been tickled pink to have gotten out and taken part in that. Yes, they talk the talk, as the previous Minister of Environment of the Liberal government loves to say, but when it came to doing something, getting out and helping to create awareness of the pollution problems in the city of Toronto, they didn't show up. They talk the talk, but they indeed forget to walk the walk.

It's interesting to see in today's paper from Ottawa that the Liberal Minister of the Environment — she happens to be a constituent of mine — is talking about gasoline

formulation, putting it off until September rather than getting on with doing something today about the sulphur content in the gasoline in Canada. Here in Ontario it's at the highest level across Canada, but no, she's putting it off till September, another typical Liberal move.

We hear a lot about good news. I notice that the Liberals are very reticent about announcing good news, so I thought I would. I'll bring to your attention that there is about a \$40-million expansion of the Cataraqui Town Centre, in the Kingston area, which includes 30 new stores. This comes from the Kingston paper of Saturday, May 16, 1998: "The project will generate about 210,000 man-hours of construction work." I'd change that to "person-hours" to be a little more politically correct, but I just read what's there. "The project will make room for 30 new stores and also a third department store, Sears Canada."

Interjection: Small businesses.

Mr Galt: A lot of small businesses, which this bill is really all about, protecting small business.

We brought in fair value assessment. Previous governments didn't. They were concerned that it might create too much trouble for them. Our government had the intestinal fortitude to bring forward something that was quite fair. However, in places like Toronto and ridings like Northumberland there are some pretty big adjustments as you move from the early 1940s to 1998; actually, it was based on 1996 levels, but current anyway.

That's going to make some tremendous changes in the taxes when they base it on fair value assessment and we had some municipalities pretty concerned. I get a lot of phone calls in my riding concerned about this kind of adjustment. I know there were a lot of those concerns expressed here in the city of Toronto, as you move this assessment up some 50 years: What's it going to do to their actual taxes? In some cases, there are going to be some pretty dramatic increases, so we responded — not only listened but responded. There's a big difference between listening and responding, and we're now acting. That is very significant. We're looking at limiting that tax increase to 2.5% on an annual basis, provided the local municipality accepts that and takes it into consideration.

I'd like to remind members that it's business here in Ontario that powers the province; it powers Ontario. It's business that create jobs, it's business that builds wealth and it's business that generates the taxes that the government depends on. We recognize and we applaud the entrepreneurial spirit in this province and recognize what small enterprise does.

I often wonder, does the opposition ever wonder where we would be without small business? It's pretty obvious from those lost 10 years; I don't think they really cared, because they had 65 tax increases during those years. They doubled the budget and they actually tripled the debt, which was just absolutely unacceptable.

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Small business Ontario is not asking for help. They're proud people. They're not asking for help, but what they are asking for is fair treatment. The work ethic of small

business is what makes Ontario so great. It's what makes Canada so great. I know it's a nasty word for the NDP, but it's what makes capitalism really work. The fact is that people in small businesses work hard to take less in exchange for the possibility of success, for the possibility that their business may grow and may prosper.

Further protection of Bill 16: I mentioned a few minutes ago the 2.5% cap on all businesses from this bill. That will give the municipalities the opportunity to bring in a bylaw to cover that. That will be over the next three years and will include the realty and business tax.

There's also in this bill a transitional provision which permits municipalities to delay the payment of their school property taxes in 1998. I mentioned a few minutes ago that I've received several calls in my riding about the concern about this transitional year. It's working out very well, giving them a break, holding off, with the province to forward the funds. However, that will only be in place for this one current year.

It's just been brought to my attention that under the NDP government the only way to start a small business was first to buy a big one and then wait; it became a small business rather quickly.

I know it's upsetting to the opposition to realize the amount of time I spent in practice. I practised in a partnership in Napanee for some six years and prior to that practised in Seaforth. I know what it is to meet my payroll. I know what it is to pay property taxes. It might come as a surprise to somebody who was involved in education, for example, for a lot of their life prior to being elected and coming here.

Mr Wildman: A noble profession.

Mr Galt: A noble profession. Absolutely. That's one thing the member for Algoma and I agree on, that being in politics, particularly provincial politics, is indeed a noble role to play.

This bill goes on to the cutting of the commercial education tax. In looking at my riding of Northumberland, by 2005 that will be a reduction of \$1.7 million, or a 27% reduction in that tax rate.

There's no question that lower taxes create jobs. That's what this government's about. That's why we reduced income tax, that's why we reduced the employer health tax and the payroll taxes, and that's why the jobs are being created, regardless of what the opposition has to say. Just ask the economists; they can explain it.

In conclusion, Bill 16 is another example of this government's commitment as we listen to the concerns of the public and respond to those concerns of everyday Ontarians. Business owners have told us about their concerns that sudden hikes in property taxes will jeopardize their profitability. We're responding by limiting tax increases for businesses because of market value assessment. We're responding by looking at the transitional year with the education tax. We're responding by reducing the education tax on property and business by some \$500 million.

Other governments have failed small business in the past. We are listening and we are acting. Consequently, I'm very pleased to support this particular motion of time

allocation so we can get on with this very important budget bill, Bill 16, which I am also very proud to support.

Mr Bradley: It's always interesting to see what the YPCs are doing these days. They have so much money on the government side for these Young Progressive Conservatives who have all the answers at the age of 21 about how the poor shall be shunted aside and the wealthy shall do well because they happen to be clever or they happen to be privileged. I hear this reflected in these speeches. I'm glad to see that they have something to do, that they go through all the old Hansards and so on. It does warm my heart to know that those YPCs have those jobs.

As to the last speaker, the member for Northumberland, in all my time in this Legislature since 1995 I thought he was a small business person. I've listened to these speeches day after day in the House and I was really under the impression that this was one of the prime examples of the private sector. But if my recollection is correct, he has been on the public payroll for a long time, as certainly I have, being in this Legislature. But I've listened to these speeches and I honestly thought Dr Galt was this free-enterpriser, this small business person, but I've been informed that he was on the public payroll all these years, lecturing and being paid from the public purse. I only note that because it's a shock and a surprise to me, having listened to all those speeches.

What we have before us this evening is yet another motion choking off debate by the Harris government. The Harris government has never liked criticism and has never liked a thorough debate of its policies, because when there is a thorough debate on most of its legislation and its regulatory framework and its policies, the public is exposed to the other side of the issue, not just the millions of dollars this government spends on self-serving advertising.

People in this province will know that a couple of weeks go they received a glossy pamphlet in the mail from the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board. The member for Wellington holds it up now. It is simply a piece of government propaganda, probably the worst I have ever seen. It was mailed at the cost of at least three quarters of a million dollars to all households in Ontario.

The head of that agency is David Lindsay, a fine fellow. I always liked David Lindsay when he was around this place at Queen's Park, a very pleasant individual to talk to. I think a lot of people would call David a friend. But he was the principal secretary to the Premier of this province when he was leader of the Conservative Party. He was a resource person for the Conservative caucus in charge of communications and so on. This very partisan political person is now heading up a so-called non-partisan board, the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board. So far, all they've done is produce government propaganda at the taxpayers' expense. There never seems to be money, for instance, when hospitals need money to continue their good services, but we have lots of money for self-serving government propaganda by the Harris regime.

I heard reference made to the fact that we must rush this legislation through. The people of Ontario would want to know that this Legislature did not sit for a period from

the Christmas break, that is, probably the third week of December, right to nearly the end of April. Mike Harris did not want the House sitting. He did not want the daily question period and he did not want the daily questioning of ministers and others in the hallway outside this chamber where there's public scrutiny, so he simply didn't call the House back. Then he brings in bills now and wants to rush the bills through the Legislature without giving them proper consideration.

This government has established an all-time record for one thing, and that is the number of times it has imposed closure and time allocation motions which choke off debate in this Legislature, which limit public hearings and which do not allow individual members of this Legislature to give the required scrutiny in committee and in this House to legislation. That has become a habit. They've filed now I think five — the NDP House leader will nod if I'm correct — five closure motions this week on legislation. This, after keeping the House out of session for over four months. Then they decide they're going to start imposing time allocation motions.

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This is something that resonates on a non-partisan basis. Even some Conservatives I've spoken to are apprehensive about the way this government stampedes or bulldozes its legislation through this House, because they believe, even if they agree with the government bills, that careful scrutiny and analysis and amendment are all essential if legislation is to be of the highest quality.

We don't see this happening, because the whiz kids who run this government, non-elected people usually in their late 20s or early 30s, sit in the back rooms of the Premier's office and dictate what goes on. The others are simply here, if they're not in the cabinet, to read the notes from those people and say what a good job the government is doing. I always thought that government members required a third hand, because they need that to pat themselves on the back almost on a continuous basis.

I heard reference made to the tax cut. They like to make this reference to their income tax cut. I have quoted many a time in this House the most conservative of economists, councillor Dr Joseph Kushner of Brock University. I was talking to Dr Kushner on the weekend because I wanted to ask him: "Have you changed your mind? You watch the Legislature, you hear these Conservative members get up and try to tell everybody in the province that somehow the crackpot income tax cut, combined with these drastic cuts in government expenditures, have an expansionary effect."

He said it's exactly the opposite. Yes, we have low interest rates here in Canada, the lowest we've had in a long time. Small business loves those low interest rates because they're able to make some purchases and borrow money to expand their businesses at a decent rate, not like the Mulroney years, not like the Conservative years of Brian Mulroney when those interest rates were sky-high. They're now low, and our dollar is very competitive, about 68 or 69 cents right now, and the people in the export industries here think that's fabulous. The auto

industry and the pulp and paper industry think that's great. Our export business is doing extremely well.

I know that the Premier has sent a letter to Bill Clinton thanking Bill Clinton for those same policies in the United States, those low-interest policies, those stimulative policies south of the border that are stimulating the demand so people buy Ontario products. I want to get a copy. I'm going to ask the Premier next time he's in the House to table that letter of appreciation to Bill Clinton for stimulating the US economy so that there are so many purchasers coming here in Ontario.

But here's what Dr Kushner, the most conservative of economists, the most conservative person I know in terms of government expenditure, has to say, and I wrote it down: "If you cut taxes and cut government expenditures by approximately the same amount, the effect is contractionary, and the contractionary effect is about the amount of the tax cut." This is called the balanced budget multiplier. He said, "When we cut taxes there are leakages in that cut." In other words, it's not all spent on domestically produced products or services.

There are leakages, first of all, to savings. Some people choose to put it into savings — nothing wrong with that, but that has nothing to do with stimulating the economy in Ontario — or to goods and services made in other countries, often luxury items, if they're the people who benefit most from the tax cut. That's the richest people because they get the most back in their pocket. They're most likely going to spend it on a foreign holiday in Aruba or Spain or Paris or somewhere like that, or on foreign-made luxury products. So there are a lot of leakages.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I want to get into that because we would not want to file any questions with the freedom of information commissioner about expenditures of ministers on trips. The member from Halton should be careful when he raises that issue because that will come forward mightily quickly.

So we have a situation where what is happening is downloading taking place.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Bradley: Would you like to get the figures from the trip to Japan, sir? Would you like me to put in a freedom of information request for how much it cost when your ministers visited Japan? If you would like to yap, we can do that.

Mr Chudleigh: Two nights.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Bradley: I ask the member from Halton if that's what he —

Mr Chudleigh: You're disgusting.

The Acting Speaker: Order. One more peep and that's it.

Mr Bradley: If he would like that, we can arrange that. I don't plan to do so, but if he'd like —

Mr Chudleigh: If you like.

Mr Bradley: Well, if you insist —

The Acting Speaker: Order. That's the last time I'm telling you.

Mr Bradley: I don't think your ministers would like that to happen. I'm not the kind of person who would ordinarily do that, but you're insisting. I can hear you over there insisting that we do that on this side of the House. That's always a story, I can tell you; fairly or unfairly, I can assure you, that is always a story.

Let's talk about the downloading that's happening and why we're seeing municipalities facing the crunch. I heard the Premier call municipal politicians whiners at one time because they were expressing concern about the downloading of responsibilities, complete with the onerous financial obligations that come with them. This is similar to New Jersey. If you look at New Jersey, what happened was that the right-wing Republican government in New Jersey cut state income taxes but property taxes went up substantially.

Property taxes, as we know, do not take into account a person's ability to pay; income taxes do. If a person happens to be unemployed for a long time, that person is not going to pay as much in income tax, but that does not affect the property tax. If that person has fallen on hard times, the property tax must still be paid.

I heard other taxes mentioned. The member for Northumberland, Dr Galt, who talks like a free-enterpriser but has certainly been in the public sector for many years, likes to mention tax increases. Well, they're up now to — at last count, I had 287 tax increases since the Harris government has come into office. The member for Durham East says, "How do you get that calculation?" I remember Mike Harris said that a user fee is a tax, and I agreed with Mike Harris. He was leader of the Conservative Party at the time, and when he said, "A user fee is a tax," I said, "You know, Mike, there are times when we're in disagreement and times when we're in agreement." I agreed with Mike when he said a user fee is a tax.

If I could go through it more extensively, if we had the resources of the Conservative Party and the government resources to find these things out, we would probably find out there are 500 increases in these user fees.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I would be happy to find some of these tax increases for my friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs and explain them to him. User fees do not take into account a person's ability to pay, so a person who is better off is less impacted by a user fee than a person who is not well-off. That's why today, our national game being hockey — my friend from Lakeshore would say lacrosse — we see some kids who cannot play hockey, because the cost of playing hockey now is far greater than it was just a few years ago. One of the major factors is the user fee, the cost of facilities being reflected in the fee to pay. Kids of well-off people can afford to play without much sacrifice, but those of modest and low income are unable to do so.

The municipalities are beside themselves over the fact that there are these user fees, these tax increases, this downloading, but some of them are being lured into accepting transition funds because they can say, "Look, this

year we had no tax increase." I warn those people that the government of Ontario will look good with those transition funds because it will tide them over to their election, but two and a half years from now, when the municipal election comes up, those transition funds will have disappeared. Then the real crunch comes for municipalities, either further cuts in services, further cuts in the quality of life we have, or increases in taxes and in user fees.

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Mr Wildman: The transition they're talking about is the provincial election.

Mr Bradley: The transition is in fact the provincial election. They should not be lured into accepting those funds only for the purpose of getting these people through to the provincial election.

I looked at some of the downloading. Mr Speaker, you would be familiar with that. I was amused, and my friends from Toronto will remember, that the member for Scarborough West, Mr Brown, was out protesting this property tax bill, against Ernie Eves. He was protesting. I was amused by that. It was his own government. Then the other day I saw that the member for Scarborough East, Mr Gilchrist, was out with a sign and a petition over cuts to GO Transit. Those cuts have come as a result of the downloading of the Harris government. He should be outside Mike Harris's office protesting, not somewhere in Scarborough East. He should be outside the Premier's office protesting. Then he would be in the right place.

My colleagues tell me — one says it's the fourth and one says maybe the fifth bill. It has taken five bills to try to get this right, and now they want to ram it through. They wanted it through last week with no hearings. The opposition said, "You've got to have hearings." The clerks and treasurers, the independent people they are, said: "You've got to have hearings. There are some real problems with this." I think we've been able to accomplish hearings, meagre as they are, and the government certainly doesn't want any wild protesters in there; just pacified people they say they want.

I would like to talk about the credit rating very briefly. My colleagues will throw something at me when they want me to sit down. They will remember that Ernie Eves, as a Conservative member, used to say when the NDP was in power — Bud, you'll remember this — that the credit rating was everything. The AAA credit rating that we had under the Liberal government, when the NDP got in power it fell down to a lower rate. The AAA rating fell several notches to AA- or the equivalent, and the world had come to an end. Ernie Eves and Mike Harris would get up and demand that the government do something about that.

My friend Bud Wildman would like to know what Ernie says today about these credit ratings. He says: "They're nice reading but it's like some movie reviews: Some people like them, some people don't. I don't do budgets and policies for Ontario based on what people in New York think." This is a change too.

There was another problem that arose on the weekend. I'm wondering how many Conservative members were in London on the weekend. Some of them had masks on. The

member for York-Mackenzie was there at the Reform Party convention.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): As an observer.

Mr Bradley: "As an observer," he says. There were several people wearing masks at the convention and I thought they might be Conservative members of Parliament, provincial Conservatives there. But I want to warn them. I watched it on television, on CPAC. They were talking about getting together. The Star said the following:

"Faced with a mini-rebellion, Calgary MP Jason Kenney and Reform organizer Nancy Branscombe hastily explained the 'United Alternative' banner is really just a recruitment vehicle for the Reform Party. 'We're not trying to form a coalition under the United Alternative banner. It will be a coalition under the Reform banner,' Branscombe explained."

It says, "But for Conservatives, on the other hand, the cat is out of the bag. Those Tories and other right-wingers who contemplated the idea they could work with Reform without being swallowed up have heard the warning."

It goes on to talk about the provincial Harris Tories:

"But Harris's provincial Tories, many of whom are already federal Reformers, are showing interest and some have signed on."

"In a letter to Reform delegates published in the London Free Press on Thursday, right-wing Tory honcho Peter White praised Manning's initiative, but argued a right-wing alternative to the Liberals is not possible under any of the present party banners. White, a former aide to Brian Mulroney" —

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I really believe it would be beneficial to have the member back on track on the subject we're to be debating tonight.

The Acting Speaker: I kind of agree with you.

Mr Bradley: I will try to get there, Mr Speaker. I know my friend from York-Mackenzie, who was at the convention, will want me to at least finish this paragraph. He'll let me. It says here, "White — a former aide to Brian Mulroney and former chief of Conservative fundraising — is an executive with Conrad Black's Hollinger Inc."

There it is. We all know that Conrad's bought two more papers. The Sun corporation was apparently frozen out, TorStar was frozen out and Conrad got them almost uncontested. He now owns about 60% of the newspapers in Ontario.

I want my colleagues, who are very interested in aspects of this bill, to have something to say about this. I could go on at some length, but I want to hear from the member for Oakwood, I want to hear from the member for Yorkview, I want to hear from the member for Essex South, all of whom will provide us with even more information about this specific piece of legislation and why this particular closure motion should be opposed by all who believe in democracy.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I believe the member for St Catharines has just said that we will be splitting the remaining time among ourselves, which is fine.

I'm pleased to rise and enter the debate on this very important piece of legislation, the so-called Bill 16. Bill 16 is part of the family which belongs to the original Bill 106. This is the fifth amendment to that particular bill. Let me say that I am very grateful to have these few minutes of time, courtesy of the government, which is calling for no more debate on this most important piece of legislation.

What's baffling is that if it really is so important, why would the government invoke closure on such an important piece of legislation? If it is as good as they say, it would be in the government's interest to prolong the debate as long as possible and take these 73 pages out into the field and ask for input from people throughout Ontario. If this is so good, I think it would be in their interest to go outside and say, "Look at what we are planning to do for you municipalities and people in Ontario." I wonder why they don't do that. Instead, they are saying, "You members of the House, members of the public, the people who elected you to this House, we are going to curtail your time to address the concerns you have with Bill 16."

Therefore, I am not the only one to say that this bill, which is only an amendment, 73 pages — that's the fifth already to Bill 106. We are not the only ones to say that this bill is terrible, is unworkable, is confusing, is abominable. You have to listen to what the cornerstones, as I would call them, of every municipality have to say. They are not politicians, but they are the people who make politicians work efficiently in every municipality in Ontario. They don't have political affiliation. They are the ones who tell the politicians how to run their business in many municipalities in Ontario. I am speaking about the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario.

There is no municipality that could function properly or even function at all without the expertise and the knowledge of the clerks and the treasurers of the municipalities in Ontario, and what do they say about Bill 16, this wonderful piece of legislation which the government is so bent on pushing through? The last two speakers, namely, Nepean and Northumberland, said: "We have to push it through. We have to give municipalities those tools." Municipalities are saying: "Hold a second. What tools are you giving us? We don't want this piece of legislation. This is unworkable. You can keep it."

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This is what they say about Bill 16. I'll first read you the paragraph at the beginning and then what they have to say at the end once they have gone through the 73 pages of Bill 16: "This bill is complicated, cumbersome, confusing and, too often, badly drafted." Can you imagine? This is the fifth revision. Who said it? The association of clerks and treasurers. Those are the people who know what the heck they are talking about in the local municipalities. "It serves to perpetuate the bad system that the government was so bent on eliminating." The system they are talking about was the tax reform. This government, the Conservatives, said: "We are going to clean house. We're going to bring in tax reform. We're going to make it a much better system." The clerks and treasurers say, "The end product is a political and administrative nightmare."

Does the Premier understand that? Does the Premier listen to that? They say it further perpetuates an assessment system which the current government, this government, has time and time again said is outdated, is inefficient, is complicated and should be eliminated.

They conclude — because I want to add my own remarks on this particular bill so that my colleague may then have time — like this: "This bill, if passed as drafted, will embroil municipal councils in complex, confusing and inefficient systems of taxation. Administrative costs will increase. So complex is the application of Bill 106, Bill 149 and Bill 16 that few municipalities in Ontario will be able to fully bill taxes before the year is ended with any degree of success within the many parameters of the law.... A win situation is to let Bill 16 die on the order paper." This is the voice of reason, the voice of experience, and the government should be listening to that.

It was only a few days ago that we said on this side of the House that we want public hearings on this bill, and what did they do? Instead of coming up with a proposal so we could go to the various municipalities and let them tell us what they think about Bill 16, what did they do instead? They invoked closure. They want to shut us off. They want to give the public no say. This is what they have done.

What they are planning to do with Bill 16 is even worse. They have created a nightmare and they are perpetuating the inequities that exist within the system now. Conveniently, a couple of the speakers on the government side, namely, the members for Nepean and Northumberland — one said, "We can give you an example of the commercial-industrial property on Steeles Avenue." I represent the south side of Steeles. The north side is represented by Minister Palladini. Isn't that nice, that the member for Nepean says, "We have solved the problem that was choking the city of Toronto." How did they solve the problem? By allowing the inequities to persist, because a 5,000-square-foot building occupied, let's say, as a doughnut shop or a restaurant, pays some \$19,000 in taxes. On the north side of Steeles they only pay \$7,000. Can the minister, the Premier or any other member of the House tell us how they find justice in this when they continue the inequity within the tax system?

Most important, they have done two very particular things. They have told small business specifically, because this addresses small business, "You've got three years' time to get out, to sell if you can, because three years from now we're going to hit you." They have given fair warning to the business community out there.

The second thing they have done when they say, "We have to move on with this bill because we have to give municipalities the tools to run their affairs," is that in essence they have told municipalities that they have to go back to the residential taxpayer, if there is a shortage of funds, to conduct their proper business. Isn't that nice?

What Mr Eves and the Premier have done, which the members on the other side understand clearly but don't want to admit, is that for the next three years they have capped commercial-industrial taxes at 2.5%. The question, which they don't want to ask themselves, is, what happens

in the next three years? I'm asking the members, the Premier and the ministers. What is Mr Lastman, and every other municipality in Ontario, going to do when they have to provide services? Services must be provided. I'm sure they are thinking that services must be provided. If a municipality cannot go back to the commercial-industrial sector and say, "We have to raise another one, two, three, four, five points," or whatever — they can't because instead of the province saying to the municipalities, as it should have, "We'll leave it up to you; we give you the power, you administer the municipal tax dollars, so you can run your affairs," it has said, "No, you cannot touch the commercial-industrial portion."

It was only after there was a revolt, after the business community said, "What you are doing is wrong" — the member for Northumberland says: "We have listened. We have acted. That is why we have to push this through." If they were really listening, they wouldn't have come up with this bill. It would have been unnecessary. We told them what was fair, how they should have done the tax reform, but they refused to act.

What did they do? As the saying goes, "When the going gets tough, the tough ones" — do you know what the government does? Two things: (1) it defers things until after the election, for three years; and (2) it downloads. With all due respect, I have to give the government credit because they have been consistent in doing exactly that for the last three years. They have been downloading and deferring until after the next election. You know what? This is not governing. This is not creating a better tax system. This is creating a worse nightmare than we have now. Everyone, including the people on Bay Street, has been telling them that. What do we have now? We have a system that totally eliminates the potential for any fairness, for any equality in the reassessment of our tax system here in Ontario.

It was smart in a way, with the arrangement made by Mr Harris, Mr Eves and the mayor of Toronto, to say, "Let's cool these business people for the next two and a half or three years, until we get over the next election." The question is, what is going to happen three years from now? Who is going to pay? That is the question.

Unfortunately we cannot do justice to such an important piece of legislation in about ten minutes of time. I'm sure my other colleagues want to add to this, because it's an extremely important piece of legislation. The very sad thing, which the government does not understand, is that it does not change or improve the system for anyone. What they have done is make it more complicated, more confusing, even for a small municipality, to administer the changes that they are proposing.

In conclusion, it would be a very abominable thing for the government to proceed with approval of this legislation, which compounds and perpetuates the inefficiencies and inequities that exist in the present system as it is now.

With that, I will pass to my colleagues for their participation on Bill 16.

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Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I want to thank my colleague from Yorkview for his comments. He has been involved in property tax issues for many years in the former city of North York. Being a small business person himself, he knows what it's like to listen to and work with small business people and homeowners in fighting taxes. I know he has been involved in that fight for the last 15 years, so he certainly knows what he talks about and he believes strongly in fairness and equity in the area of property taxation.

In the context of this bill, which is quite alarming, this is another part of the pattern of a government that continues to invoke closure. On almost every bill that comes before this House, they don't allow full debate. They basically rush through bill after bill. It's unprecedented, probably in the history of this province, that we've seen a government ram through as many bills with closure motions as this government. The public out there probably doesn't have the time, because they're too busy trying to make a living, to realize that this government has established a very frightening pattern. Where any bill is slightly controversial, they rush it, jam it through the Legislature. Every time members of the opposition get up and question, want public hearings or want the public to know about a bill, they do not listen and they continue to ram the bill through.

Why we're here today with this Bill 16 is that this government did the same thing with a series of tax bills about a year ago. They rammed bill after bill through this Legislature without due process and without allowing for input. And you have a government that has to come back to fix up the previous mess they created by their reckless jamming through of legislation.

Certainly the public of Ontario sometimes thinks: "That bill doesn't affect me, so I don't care whether they invoke closure and stop debate on that bill. It only affects people in one part of the province or it only affects a certain segment of the population." The problem is that these things usually come around to affect all of us. Sure, cutting off debate here on Bill 16 doesn't seem to be evoking a lot of furore out there in Ontario, but it is troubling to see that this is a pattern that now has been established, that they're invoking closure after closure.

It's really the offshoot of Bill 26, which changed the whole direction of government in this province and put government back into the back room. It's government by regulation, it's government behind closed doors, it's rubber-stamping; all the members of this Legislature are now being asked to do is to rubber-stamp everything. That is not the tradition of this Legislature. Our tradition has been to question, to argue, to debate. I know sometimes the government says that's slowing things down, but here the government has basically, like Robespierre back in the post-French Revolution days, changed the calendar. They now have two days in one. That's what they've done. They even changed the —

Mr Wildman: This is the Thermidor reaction.

Mr Colle: Right. It's a Thermidorian reaction. This is the Mike Harris calendar. In a 24-hour period we've got two days. The people of Ontario, because they're being, I guess, so rushed in all this legislation, haven't caught up to the fact that this government has even changed the calendar. It's the revolutionary calendar of Mike Harris.

We have this Bill 16, which is a bill that was brought about because this government got caught. In a previous bill that this bill is protecting people from, a previous Tory bill, this government got caught increasing property taxes on 29,000 small businesses in Metropolitan Toronto; 29,000 and they got caught doing this. They thought they could get away with it. When that previous bill came out they said: "No, the bill is perfect. We've researched it. We don't need any amendment." This was about a year ago.

When the impact statements came out, the truth was revealed, that this government tried to pass on increases to 80% of the businesses in the city of Toronto. They were going to increase taxes on 30,000-odd businesses, and 17,000 of these 30,000-odd businesses were going to see tax increases of 100% or more. That's what this government got caught doing. By accident, they claim, the big bank towers downtown were going to see a tax decrease of \$300 million. That's why they've had to come back with this bill I call the Oops bill or the I-got-caught bill. That's why they've had to come back, because the small business people, across the city of Toronto especially, found them out. They got the details and found out that this government was going to basically ruin main streets not only in Toronto but right across this province; they were going to essentially wipe out small business completely. Streets like Bloor, Harbord, Broadview, Eglinton, Lawrence would be wiped out.

Small communities that rely on these vibrant small businesses for local shopping, like Leaside, Willowdale, Cabbagetown and the Annex, would have also felt the harm of wiping out small business. So it wouldn't have been the big-box stores; it wasn't the president of Canadian Tire or Home Depot and these places. They weren't out on the streets of College or St Clair protesting the Mike Harris tax bill. It wasn't Home Depot, as I said, or Canadian Tire, because they were quite happy. It was the small little hardware store that was going to see his or her taxes go from \$10,000 to \$30,000 or \$40,000 a year. That's what this Mike Harris government tried to do about a year ago. It was the small little cleaners that were going to see their taxes go from \$8,000 to \$25,000. It was the small little grocery store, not the Loblaws, the Dominion, the mega-this, mega-that; it was the little mom-and-pop grocery store that this government tried to wipe out.

Who could survive a 100% tax increase? Half of the businesses in Toronto were going to see an increase of 100% or more, 17,000 of them. Just imagine all the cleaners, the little shoe stores, the flower shops, the barber shops; these were the little stores that were going to see this mammoth Godzilla of attacks dumped upon them. That's what the Mike Harris government thought they

could sneak by the people of this province. Well, they got caught.

You know why they got caught, Madam Speaker? As you well know, in your own end of Toronto it was the small business people and the community leaders who had to take to the streets. They knew they couldn't get any hearing here at Queen's Park, because the doors of Queen's Park are closed to them. They know the big-box store owners can get to Queen's Park and get a hearing, but that little flower shop, who in the government is going to listen to them?

So what did the little flower shop owner, what did the little shoemaker have to do? The little shoemaker can't afford to hire a Bay Street lawyer or a lobbyist, as the big-box stores can. So they went to the streets. They blocked off all of Yonge Street from Hoggs Hollow up at the old Jolly Miller all the way down Eglinton. They papered up all the storefronts and said: "The Mike Harris government is not going to take away my small business. We caught you." They started basically what was a revolution against this Mike Harris attempt to close down Main Street in Toronto.

As I said, these are the people who are the heroes, who brought this government to task, and now this government is forced to come back and try to pretend they didn't try to do this to small business. That's what they did, because they had their lawyers, they had all their whiz kids. The whiz kids, as you know, are always perfect. The whiz kids are the ones who wrote up Bills 106, 149, 160. Those whiz kids knew what they were doing when they tried to basically pillage small businesses in Toronto. But again, thanks to the community leaders and the people who closed down their small shops and took to the streets — that's the only way they could get justice, because they know this government doesn't believe in hearings any more.

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This government only listens to big business. This government only listens to Bay Street. They don't listen to College Street, they don't listen to St Clair, they don't listen to Lakeshore, but they listen to Bay Street. This government gave Bay Street a \$300-million break on their taxes. That's what they did. Bay Street was happy. They were sipping those martinis. The Brie and Chablis were flowing on Bay Street because Mike Harris gave them this \$300 million. You can buy a lot of Brie and Chablis with \$300 million. But the poor little florists on the Lakeshore had to close their doors when they saw their tax assessment.

This is what happened. As Bay Street celebrated, the small little shopkeepers were in a desperate situation. What the Tory government doesn't understand is that many of these small shopkeepers never invested in the stock market, they never invested in offshore properties somewhere — as the member for St Catharines says, in Aruba. They put their life savings into that little property down there on Coxwell. That's where they put all their savings. So that little barbershop with the little apartment overhead not only was their business; it was their nest-egg

for retirement. That's why they took to the streets. That's why every street across Metro —

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, come to order.

Mr Colle: It's too bad. The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale is not happy because I'm trying to defend the cause of small business against the big-box stores. I don't have everything against the big-box stores, but the big-box stores don't need anybody to defend them. The Canadian Tires, the Home Depots, the Office Depots, the mega-stores are doing fine. I am here saying that this government is out to destroy the little flower shop, the shoemaker, the person selling for Beckers Milk or whatever it is 24 hours a day, with the little variety store. That's who I'm here to defend.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Colle: The member for York-Mackenzie is the same. He's just worried about the big mega-stores and big Bay Street. What about Main Street? What about the little guy, the little person running that little shop? They can't get to see Mike Harris or Ernie Eves. They can't afford to hire a lobbyist or a lawyer. They don't have limos.

Do you know what they have to do now? I encourage everybody: Don't be afraid to go to the streets if you've got a complaint with Mike Harris. Don't sit there in despair if you've been maltreated, if your hospital has been closed, if your small business is closed down. Don't be afraid to protest against this government, because this government is now a bit worried about a thing called the election coming up. They've got their chequebook ready and they're pretending to listen so they can buy time. As the member for Yorkview said, they want to buy time until the next election. That is why I encourage people to continue to fight and not to take the abuse that this government is heaping upon small people especially.

We should also mention that this tax itself — it's quite ironic. People are saying to me, "Why does this government continue to force us to pay for education on our property tax, especially when education is now totally controlled by the Mike Harris cabinet?" They control what textbooks you read, they control the size of the washrooms, they control every aspect of the curriculum and they set the tax rate, yet they're asking people all across this province to pay for education on their property tax when they don't have any say. It's pure taxation without representation.

More than ever people have to ask why Mike Harris is still forcing people to pay education on their property tax when they have no say in what the rate is and no say about anything in education. It's about time for the Mike Harris government to answer that. Why are people still paying for education on property tax when they have no say in the property tax whatsoever, when the school boards have been emasculated of all their power and this government now controls education?

The other thing to ask is why this government is so proud of increasing property taxes on 237,000 homes in

Toronto. This government is proud of doing that. They're saying it's good medicine for you: 237,000 homes are going to be increased. Even though they've reacted to the revolt in the streets about the hit on small business, they're still letting 237,000 people take this Mike Harris hit on their small homes.

This is what this government is still doing, and I hope people continue to take them to account and are not intimidated by this government and are not swayed by their phoney PR campaign. Fight back and let Mike Harris know you're not going to be bullied into accepting his government again.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I am pleased to have a few minutes to speak this evening to this motion of closure, of limiting debate. A famous baseball manager once said, "This is déjà vu all over again." Some people will recall last week, in this very Legislature, a motion being introduced that said, "when Bill 16 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill, without further debate or amendment; and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading" and "That the order for third reading of the bill shall then immediately be called and the remainder of the sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill."

This resolution is one step better than that. In other words, they're not going to shut us up quite as quickly. The resolution that was on the order paper last week was withdrawn about as quickly as a dew worm sucks back on the Kingsville golf course when you shine a light on it. They just threw it back. So this week what do we have?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): How fast would that be?

Mr Crozier: How fast is that? Haven't you ever tried to catch a dew worm, Minister?

Hon Mrs Ecker: No, I can't say I have.

Mr Crozier: You're not quick enough.

In any event, what we have this evening that we're debating in closing this debate, limiting debate on Bill 16 — and listen to this, folks. It says, "when Bill 16 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill, without further debate or amendment; and at such time, the bill shall be referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs."

I feel sorry for the member for Nepean when he has to get up and defend this tonight. He said, "We've decided to listen." You know why they decided to listen? The clerks and treasurers came and told them, "This thing stinks and the best thing you can do is withdraw it." They said, "No, we're not going to withdraw it but we're going to listen." I'll tell you, Speaker, and the folks at home how long they're going to listen. They're going to establish the deadline for tabling amendments and filing them with the clerk. The Chair of the standing committee on finance can do that, and that happens to be a Tory. Then — and we're at June 1 right now — it says, "at 4:30 pm on June 3, 1998, those amendments which have not yet been moved

shall be deemed to have moved." That's a lot of listening, isn't it?

We know we're going to have this thing done by June 3, this process of listening to the people: "the committee shall report the bill to the House on June 4." When is that? Thursday?

Mr Sergio: Thursday this week.

Mr Crozier: This week, anyway. Then, in their generosity, rather than the remainder of the sessional day, lo and behold they're going to allow a whole sessional day, probably another 20 minutes or so.

When I first came to this place I thought I'd really be given the opportunity to speak on behalf of my constituents. The first government when I was here was the NDP government, and there was the odd bill in which limited debate was brought in, but this is becoming the order of the day. In other words: "We're going to listen, folks, we're going to have an open ear, but the problem is we're only going to listen a little bit. We're going to make you think we're listening."

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The only reason they even brought this motion today, withdrew the other one that I said went more quickly than a dew worm on the Kingsville golf course is that the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario said that Bill 16 is "complicated, cumbersome, confusing and too often badly drafted. The end product is a political and administrative nightmare." The government's answer to that is: "We're going to listen to you from 9 o'clock in the morning until 12 noon on Wednesday, June 3. In three hours, we're going to fix a bill that is complicated, cumbersome, confusing and too often badly drafted, and the end product is a political and administrative nightmare."

The clerks and treasurers told you what to do with this bill, and they did it in a very nice way. They could have used language that was much stronger. But they said, "Simply let it die on the order paper."

I started out by saying that this is an example of mismanagement. This is the fifth bill. If Bill 106, in the winter of 1997, a year and a half ago, had been drafted properly, we wouldn't have needed Bill 149, we wouldn't have needed Bill 160, we wouldn't have needed Bill 164 and we wouldn't have needed Bill 16.

Some of the government members talk about being in business and they know all about business. I was in a large manufacturing firm, H.J. Heinz Co, for 11 years. I was secretary-treasurer and part-owner of a retail lumber business, a small business, for 22 years. I was in the insurance business for three years and I was on municipal council, part of the time as mayor, for eight years. If anybody had had to bring the same thing back four or five times in any one of those areas, they would have been fired. Absolute mismanagement. They might have had one chance, they might have had two because we're really generous, but to have to bring something like Bill 16 back four or five times is absolute and total mismanagement, and the clerks and treasurers are telling them they still don't have it right, that the bill should just simply die.

I don't know what magic this government is going to perform in three hours on June 3. On Wednesday, June 3, they are going to take all these bills, they are going to take all the mess-up with all these bills, they are going to take a bill that should be scrapped, that should die on the order paper and they're going to fix it in three hours. Speaker, as you well know, and I've spoken in this Legislature before, I'm not a gambling person. I'm not a gambling person unless it's a safe bet, and then I'm willing to put some money down. I'll put money down that this Bill 16, after its amendments on June 3, still won't be right.

I tell you, municipalities should have had their tax demands out weeks ago. The government promised them they would give them the roll last Friday, I think it was. I tell you what, folks at home, they still don't have the rolls. I tell you what, folks at home, the computer program isn't fixed yet. I tell you what, folks at home, your municipalities are going to be crying for money. I tell you what, folks at home, municipalities are going to have to pay interest because they're going to have a shortage of cash.

I tell you what, folks at home, this bill as it's written now, in the words of the clerks and administrators, is "complicated, cumbersome, confusing and badly drafted," and when they get three hours of fixing done on Wednesday morning, it's still going to be confused, complicated, badly drafted and should be allowed to die on the order paper. If they don't do the right thing and let this thing die, do you know what we're going to have? We're probably going to have the great-great-great grandson to deal with.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I was going to say I'm glad to have a chance to join in this debate. Actually I'm not glad to have a chance to join in this debate. I'm always happy to have the opportunity to speak on important issues, but this is a debate that quite frankly should not be happening. So I'm not glad to be up on my feet speaking on this closure motion. We should remind people who may be watching this, that's what we are debating. While we're talking about property taxes, Bill 16 and the property tax bill, what's really in front of us tonight is in fact a closure motion brought by the government to end debate here in this House on this bill but, more important than that, to pretend that they're going to go through a process of committee with this bill.

What we're going to do, according to this motion, is to have this bill in committee this coming Wednesday — that's two days from now, the day after tomorrow; in fact, less than two days from now — from 9 o'clock in the morning to 12 noon for consideration; ie that's the debating time that we will have to actually hear people who might want to come forward and speak to this bill — three hours on an important issue like this.

Then in the afternoon the committee is going to sit, according to this motion, and do what's called clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; in other words, dealing with whatever amendments there may be that the government may bring forward or we from the opposition parties may bring forward, and that will be it.

That will be it on a piece of legislation that is going to change the nature of the whole property tax system in

Metropolitan Toronto and indeed throughout the province; on a piece of legislation that according to the people who will have to put this in place, the municipal clerks and administrators, will cause political and administrative chaos; on a piece of legislation that they said the best thing to happen to this bill would be for it to die on the order paper. They set out 12 pages of criticism of this bill in a letter they sent to the minister last week in which they outlined a whole bunch of errors, not just political differences, not just administrative differences, not just difficulties in implementing the legislation but actual mistakes in the way in which this legislation has been drafted.

Does that surprise us? No. As has been mentioned by other speakers, this is a piece of legislation that for the fourth time now tries to deal with the property tax system in this province, and for the fourth time the government is trying to do this in the same way they did it before, by rushing the legislation through. By rushing the legislation through, they're going to find in this bill, as they found in the previous legislation, that they're creating an even worse problem rather than fixing the previous ones that they created. The bulk of this bill aims to try to correct mistakes that were set out in the previous pieces of legislation, yet we know that even as they try to do that, there will be mistakes made because what we have here is a piece of legislation quite frankly that was put together hastily and that is being rushed through the House in a way that should not happen.

It doesn't surprise us because only about three months ago, if you'd asked members of the government would they bring forward this type of legislation, they would have vehemently denied it because at that point they were busy beating up on small businesses here in Toronto and throughout the province.

In fact, I was at a meeting when Minister Eves announced the new structure for financing and the new assessment system as it related to small business. He was saying there was no way he was going to do anything to assist small business here in Metropolitan Toronto because the problems that had been created here, as he put it then, were of Toronto's own making. Of course, then we saw the problems and then small business began to see the impact of the new market value assessment system and we had a situation in which the government had to listen. The government had to change, to move from that position that they took in mid-February to about a month later, recognizing that they could not let small business, not just here in Metropolitan Toronto but indeed throughout the GTA, deal with those kinds of inequities and those kinds of problems.

Their solution was to bring in this magical cap of 2.5%. Has that addressed the issue? I think to some extent it has, and for many businesses perhaps it has. At least it gives the impression that it addresses the problem, because what we have is a situation in which the tax increases for small businesses will be capped at 2.5%. Of course, we don't know what's going to happen at the end of this three-year period when the caps come off. It's a convenient way for the government to push off the problem in the future and,

at the same time, they have now created a situation in which municipalities that opt to go into this system will end up in a situation in which the only place they will have to be able to deal with increases from the continuing download of services from this government on to the municipalities will be to increase property taxes for homeowners. That is something that municipality after municipality is now beginning to realize.

2040

The other shoe, as the saying goes, finally dropped in Metropolitan Toronto. Here in the new city people are realizing that what they thought was a good deal may not be such a good deal. To quote Councillor John Adams, "It puts us in handcuffs for the next three years." That's the predominant view that now is there at city council.

Beyond that, leave the politicians aside and what we have here goes back to the kind of stinging rebuke that this government had to listen to from the municipal clerks and administrators across the province, who have said, as I indicated earlier, in a 12-page response to this government, that this piece of legislation was going to create more problems than it was going to solve. Even today they are coming in and saying to this government that there is a minimum of five or six amendments that they absolutely need to be prepared to make for this legislation to even have the semblance of going forward. They make it clear that these are what they consider to be essential amendments, but they say, "Even if all of these amendments are adopted, Bill 16 will continue to have manifold problems, not the least of which are its complicated provisions and confusing drafting."

Part of that problem we're going to see unfold in the regulations. We understand that the regulations that are to accompany this bill, which we originally were given to understand we might actually see before the bill was passed but I suspect we will not see, are now in their drafting form, have probably reached some 70 to 75 pages, and God knows how long they will be by the time they are finished. All of this is being rammed through. All of this is forcing municipalities, particularly the people who are going to have to implement this, to try to deal with this in a situation in which it is impossible to enact proper legislation, proper regulations to make the changes.

The only sensible thing we can see is for the government to realize this and to do what even the clerks have said, which is to let the bill die on the order paper. We would go one step further and say what they need to do is to freeze the whole assessment system for another year, let things settle down, go back to the drawing-board and in effect devise a new tax system that makes the changes that we all believe need to be made but doesn't create this kind of division.

But of course this is the way in which the Tory government of Mike Harris continues to behave, trying to divide and conquer; in this case, trying to be seen to be responding to small businesses but setting them up against homeowners and leaving municipalities and municipal councillors to carry the bag for them. That's the kind of approach they're taking.

They've had to at least to some extent listen to the municipal clerks who have come forward and said: "You can't do it. It's not going to work. There are going to be increasing problems with this 2.5% cap in the way in which you're doing it and with some of the other provisions that are in this bill." The government again is going to give the impression that they have been listening, but even they will not be able, no matter how they spin this, to try and portray this one day of committee on this bill as being in any way a proper and just process for a bill of this magnitude.

The irony is that while we oppose what the government is doing in the whole property tax field, we certainly here in the New Democratic Party recognize that at the end of the day the government has the numbers, if they want to be able to carry the bill. We had, ironically enough, some three to four weeks ago suggested to them a way in which this bill could actually have been in committee for a couple of weeks of good, solid discussion in hearings, instead of us having the bill just simply sit on the order paper or be debated in this House for most of the past week, as it was.

At that point the government, in their unending wisdom, said: "No, no, no. Thank you, but we don't want to do it that way. We know best. This bill has to get passed." They said it had to get passed by last week. It's now going to get passed by the end of this week. Ironically enough, they could have had that if that's what they'd wanted and still had a process worthy of the name of having the bill in committee for a few weeks with proper hearings, proper discussion, proper debate, proper drafting or proper amendments. Yet what we have again is the continuing arrogance of this government that believes they know best in the face of anybody who opposes them.

From time to time someone comes forward, as in this case, the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, and then the government is kind of caught, because these aren't exactly left-leaning lunatics. These aren't exactly zealots out there. These are people who have to implement this thing and they're saying: "We can't do it. It can't be done." Ironically enough they end up saying similar things to what many of us and many people out there have been saying, which is, "You're moving too fast, you're moving in the wrong direction and you're not doing this in the way that you need to do it," so we end up in these problems.

It'll be interesting to see. We look forward to the limited work that can be done in the time that's going to be there in committee the day after tomorrow. I hope the government will at least have the decency to come forward at the beginning of that session and tell us what amendments they're prepared to make so that we're not waiting until the afternoon, minutes before we're supposed to vote on those amendments, to find out exactly what the government is intending to do.

I would like to go on at greater length, but I will stop there. I will indicate now, which I probably should have done at the beginning, that I will be dividing the balance of this time with my colleagues from Sault Ste Marie and

Algoma. Given that the time is limited, I will sit down and let them pick up from here.

Mr Martin: Again tonight we have before us a piece of work that is so typical of this government, a government in a hurry, always needing to fix something, always, though, in the end hurting somebody with no plan, no vision, just ideology run amok.

Tonight we have before us again a piece of legislation to put time limits on the process we have developed here over a number of years to vet pieces of legislation that in the end affect every person who lives and works in Ontario, affect every community that exists in Ontario.

We have this government wanting to do it yesterday, not wanting to take the time that is necessary to honour the time-proven tradition of bringing something in here and allowing for that full discussion that is expected to happen, where holes are pointed out or benefits are pointed out and everybody has a chance to participate in a full and wholesome way, allowing for that legislation then to go back out into the community for discussion with people who might be affected, directly or indirectly, so that they might have a say, so that they might bring to the discussion, to the table their experience, their understanding, their view of how this might affect them in either a positive or a negative way, so that at the end of the day we have a piece of legislation in front of us that has the fingerprints of all those who call Ontario home in a way that speaks of a confidence that it will actually do what it was intended to do, that it will clear up the difficulties that were laid out, usually in the preamble of such bills, that speak to an evolution of laws that govern us all, of things we put in place to help us work together to make sure that everybody is paying their fair share.

At the end of the day, everybody is able to participate in a way that speaks to their being able to live up to their potential and contribute so that they win, the community wins and we have a future together that is full of hope and good feeling for the people of a jurisdiction like Ontario.

Always, it seems, in this place when we deal with the business of this government we're in a huge hurry. Always at the end of the day, what we put in place by way of legislation turns out to be lacking, seriously and sadly lacking in some significant and important way. We need to bring it back to this place to fix it, which in fact is what we're doing with this little piece of legislation that we're dealing with here, Bill 16.

It's a bill that has been drafted to fix a piece of work that this government in its haste brought in to answer a very serious challenge out there re the question of how we tax each other in a property tax way to pay for those goods and services we all come to expect and rely on, so we can get on with our lives, and together find ways to make it easier for everybody to take care of common challenges and provide common opportunities in the communities in which we live.

2050

This government, in its haste to ideologically turn the province in a direction that is driven primarily by the forces of the market and the predominant culture of an

economy that is interested in nothing but money, in particular money for those who own and have an interest in big industry, big corporations that generally no longer have many ties to or much interest in a jurisdiction like Ontario and the communities and cities that make up that jurisdiction, has imposed on municipalities a whole bevy of costs for services.

I don't think anybody in their right mind, anybody who understands how democracy works, anybody who understands how you in a civilized society decide on things we can do together that will make people's lives easier, would in any way for a second consider putting those on to a property tax base and ask people who pay property taxes to be responsible for paying for and delivering those services.

They have downloaded services on to municipalities that don't belong there, that are going to cost them in a major way. They then were in a big hurry to change the property tax system, which we all know needed to be changed but which we also know should have taken longer than we allocated here because of the new regulations we all live under in this place which allow the government, any time it feels like it, to bring in a bill like we have before us here tonight which puts time constraints on the ability of people to assess and view and participate in the discussion about how these things can happen. So you end up with a complete and utter mess that now needs to be fixed.

The interesting thing is that when you look at Bill 16 and what it proposes by way of a fix, you will understand that it doesn't fix anything. As a matter of fact, it creates even more problems for the people of the communities out there that this government is now trying to speak so in favour of helping.

We heard members across the way, as they usually do when they get up to defend or support a piece of legislation their government is bringing forward, tell us about all the good things they're doing and how they're going to help this group and that group and the other group, when we know, anybody knows who's out there talking to anybody in a community across this province today, that this government is really helping nobody but themselves, and big corporate interests that will ultimately help themselves as well.

Every community across this province is feeling ever more increasingly a sense of tremendous anxiety and disease as they look at what's coming at them by way of the download. In particular, I would suggest to you that the group you spoke so eloquently about earlier in the debate as one that you help, that group we commonly call small business, the small business entrepreneurs in our communities, are, if you talk to them off the record, if you talk to them away from the boardroom of the chamber of commerce, beginning to feel, as are the working people of this province, ever more anxious and ever more concerned about the impact of what this government is doing to them.

If you really want to help small business, you'll stop taking money out of communities, you'll stop charging communities for things they can't afford to pay for and

you'll begin to do things in this place that reflect in a real, concrete way that you have concerns about small business and want to help them.

I'll just give you a small example in the few minutes I have left here in this debate tonight before I allow my colleague from Algoma to wrap up for us. For example, the 21.6% that you took away from people in our communities who were on assistance of one form or another delivered by this government in the summer and fall of 1995, which everybody thought was a great idea — you know, here are some people who are out there doing nothing, lazing around, drinking beer and taking money from the public purse, when anybody who knows, who is in contact with those folks, who works with those folks, who lives with those folks, understands that they are our neighbours, they are our family members, they are people who find themselves in a period of time in between having a job and who this government unfairly centred out as the cause of all our ills and as the sole focus of their agenda to target somebody and take some money away.

You know what you've done by taking that 21.6% away from those most marginalized and most poor in our communities? You've also taken, in the instance of Sault Ste Marie, my community, on average — we've done the mathematics — \$2 million a month out of the economy of Sault Ste Marie. That's \$2 million that's spent in the corner store, in the grocery stores, in the clothing stores, in the small businesses of my community; \$2 million that you as a government have taken directly out of the pockets, out of the cash registers of the small business people in this province. That's \$24 million a year. When you add that to the number of people you've knocked off the rolls, who you claim are out working, who we know are not, that becomes an even more exorbitant number, an even more dramatic number that small businesses are now beginning to feel as they do their month-ends, as they do their year-ends and begin to understand more clearly than ever before what this government is about.

In my own community, I would suggest that by way of the cutting of provincial service jobs in the Ministry of Natural Resources, in the Ministry of the Environment, in the Ministry of Transportation, in the Ministry of Education, in the Ministry of Health and on and on we've probably lost out of the economy of Sault Ste Marie some \$35 million to \$50 million a year. So we're now talking \$75 million a year, directly due to decisions made by your government, out of the economy of my community that used to flow almost directly into the cash registers of every small business in every mall, on every corner, on every strip of small business in my community, directly out of their pockets.

If you want to do something to help small business, which you said a few minutes ago you indeed want to do, this isn't going to do it, Bill 16 isn't going to do it, because all you're going to do with Bill 16 is put a cap on the amount of property tax these folks will have to pay, but by doing that you will shift an enormous load on to the backs of the residential property tax base. Those people are going to be out of pocket and they are the people who

actually go into your stores, your small businesses, and buy the goods and services you have to offer. What you give with one hand, you take away with the other. But that's not unusual for this government. That's the way this government operates: in a hurry, always fixing something they've broken and have not taken the time to do right, always hurting somebody, no plan, no vision, just ideology run amok.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): And it's not too far, too fast.

Mr Martin: It's not too far, too fast; it's just absolutely in the wrong direction.

Something else you might want to do, and I suggest it here tonight in lieu of this as you try to fix this property tax mess you've created, I suggest you take the time to work it out properly and talk about it with some people so that it works in the end. But something else you might do to help small business, if you are interested in helping small business, is bring to this House and table the bill that your Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations promised about two years ago to regulate the franchise industry in Ontario. Bring that forward and let's talk about that and let's see how that will help literally hundreds of small business entrepreneurs around this province who have invested every penny they've got by way of severance or pension payout because they've lost their jobs due to decisions made by your government. Let's help them. Let's do it that way and let's talk about that. But you don't want to do that. That might be too intelligent, that might be too direct and might create a fairer playing field.

Anyway, I wrap up my few thoughts tonight on this subject by saying to you that communities want stability. Communities want a plan that they can participate in, that they can count on to deliver all those things that you say so eloquently you want to do but that will not be delivered by this piece of legislation and certainly will not be delivered by cramming this piece of legislation into the time lines that you've presented by way of this bill here tonight.

I would ask everybody in this House, everybody out there across the province, to look at this, to think about it and to recognize it for what it is: a government in a hurry, always fixing something, always hurting somebody, with no plan, no vision, just ideology run amok.

2100

Mr Wildman: I want to express my appreciation to the deputy leader of our caucus and to my friend from Sault Ste Marie for allowing me to participate in the debate briefly in my capacity as House leader for our caucus.

I want to point out a couple of things. Here we are this evening debating a closure motion on Bill 16. This is one of five closure motions this government has brought forward. Under this particular motion there will be a three-hour period for consultation in committee and then clause-by-clause discussion subsequent to that.

I ask why we're here at all debating this closure motion. This is a government that kept the House out a month late, that didn't call the House back when it was supposed to come back in March because they didn't have much to

do, apparently. There wasn't a lot on the order paper. There was nothing of importance to do. So this government wasn't ready to proceed.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Member for Kitchener, order.

Mr Wildman: I know this bothers them. It bothers them to hear the truth.

Mr Lessard: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I believe if the member for Kitchener wants to heckle the member for Algoma, he should be in his own seat.

The Deputy Speaker: That really isn't a point of order. Heckling is out of order anyway. I say to the member for Kitchener, stop heckling.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I'm quite surprised that the member for Algoma would accuse this government of not doing much for too long. I've been hearing "too much, too fast."

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. Take your seat. Member for Algoma, go ahead.

Mr Wildman: Thank you, Speaker. I know that interjections are always out of order. That's why I so seldom interject myself.

The fact is that this government could have followed the calendar of this House and called us back in mid-March, which was the normal time for the House to come back into session. But the government said: "No, there's nothing pressing. There's nothing that really needs to be done that can't wait." So the House did not reconvene until a month later. And now that we have reconvened, had the throne speech and the budget, we now have five closure motions before the House. Why is that? Why is it that the government that didn't have that much to do now has to get everything done all at once?

Why is it that the government that has been worrying about property tax reform for years suddenly needs Bill 16 passed immediately, despite the fact that, as my colleague mentioned, the clerks and treasurers have written to the government a detailed critique of Bill 16 which indicates that essentially it's unworkable, that this bill is not going to fix the mistakes made by this government in the other bills related to property tax but in fact is going to make things worse, more complicated and unworkable?

It would seem to me that any reasonable government, on receiving a letter like that, would say: "Wait a minute. We'd better look at this again. We'd better sit down with these clerks and treasurers and find out what the particular problems are that they've listed in this lengthy letter and then consult with them and others, particularly the property owners — the business property owners, the residential property owners — and the people who speak for them, the taxpayers' coalitions per se, and get some advice as to how to implement this in a way that will resolve the problems."

But, no, we have a closure motion before us which gives all of those people who are interested a total of three hours to influence the government. Then the rest of the day will be spent in clause-by-clause, and if all of the amendments that are required are not passed at the end of the

day, at the end of the process, they will be deemed to have been passed. So they will go through without debate and they will be passed.

This is the fourth or fifth piece of legislation. Frankly, that's not surprising. Property tax is indeed complex. Property tax reform is complex. It has worried government after government. This is a government, though, that said they wanted to reassess the whole province. We're told by the Ministry of Finance, the revenue officials, that to do that properly would take three years, and this government said, "No, we want it done in a year or less." So there have been many, many mistakes, a multitude of mistakes made, simply because this government insisted, because this government wouldn't listen, because this government said: "Don't confuse us with facts. We know better than the experts in the field."

We've seen what people have to do to influence this government. Because this government gives a total, in this case, of three hours for consultation, the aggrieved people, the business property owners, had to get out on the streets because they weren't listened to. They couldn't make contact with Conservative MPPs. They couldn't talk to the Treasurer of Ontario and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. They wouldn't be listened to. They had to make their voices known in the streets.

That's what this government is about. It's a government that doesn't listen to the constituents of Ontario, that doesn't listen to the people it affects adversely, that believes it has all of the facts in the first place and doesn't need to be influenced one way or the other, and then when it comes to debate in the Legislature doesn't believe it needs to listen to any other opposing voices but simply can run roughshod over the democratic process in this Legislature.

The government is ruining the day. Why is it that this is the fourth or fifth piece of legislation they're having to deal with on property taxes? Because they don't listen. They aren't interested in what the experts have to say. They aren't interested in what the property taxpayers have to say. They believe they have all the facts in the first place, and inevitably they make mistakes. They try to fix them, and every time they try to fix them, they make it worse.

I believe this legislation shows clearly where this government stands. I guess if you use the example of Metropolitan Toronto, it makes it very clear where this government stands. It's clear that this government stands with the bank towers on Bay Street and it stands clearly against the shopkeepers on Main Street. There's no question about that.

If any small business people in this province had any illusions that this Conservative government listens to them, all they have to do is look at this closure motion and see that they've got a total of three hours for consultation.

If the clerks and treasurers of all the municipalities of this province had any illusion that this is a government that listens and is interested in good administration, all they have to do is look at this closure motion and see that they've got a total of three hours to discuss their concerns. If the residential property taxpayers of Ontario had any illusions that this government listens to them, they should look at their assessment notices and see the obvious errors that have occurred because this government would not proceed with caution, but rather proceeded in a way that had little or no interest in their concerns and in their interests.

This government simply wanted to get the money and to give the break to the bank towers. There's no question that this government certainly stands with big business, with the financial institutions, with the banks, with Bay Street. They do fine, thank you very much, by this so-called property tax reform.

Mr Eves, the Minister of Finance, has attempted to give the impression that he cares about business property taxpayers by putting the 2.5% cap either way on changes. But, forgive me, all that does is postpone the problem. It gets the government through the election and postpones the problem for three years.

Mark my words: No matter who is in government after the next election, we are going to be back in this House debating property tax reform and what effect this has on small business and on residential property taxpayers. There's no question we are. The only question is, who will be sitting on that side of the aisle, and will it be a government that listens? Will it be a government that is concerned about the interests of property taxpayers, be they small business taxpayers or residential property taxpayers, or will it be a government that runs roughshod over democracy and brings in closure motions that only allow for three hours' token consultation because they're not really interested in listening? All they're interested in doing is getting the money, and be damned with the property taxpayer's interests.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Johnson has moved government notice of motion number 15. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members; a five-minute bell.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion is carried.

It being now close to 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2113.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Parry Sound	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Wentworth North / -Nord	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Willowdale	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Windsor-Riverside	Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	York Centre / -Centre	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	York Mills	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)	York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)
		Nickel Belt	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Marion Boyd, Jack Carroll, Annamarie Castrilli,
Dwight Duncan, Tim Hudak, Frank Klees,
Lyn McLeod, Lillian Ross, Bruce Smith
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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Deuxième session, 36^e législature

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Tuesday 2 June 1998

Mardi 2 juin 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 2 June 1998

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ITALIAN NATIONAL DAY

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): On behalf of my colleagues, I rise for the purpose of recognizing an important event that took place on this day 52 years ago, June 2, 1946, the establishment of the democratic Republic of Italy. June 2 is of great historic significance and sentimental value to our citizens of Italian heritage and indeed to the people living in Italy, a country not only of monumental buildings, famous explorers and noted scientists, but also a trusted friend and ally, a loyal trading partner, and a committed supporter of democratic and civil rights around the world.

We recognize the valuable contribution that Italo-Canadians have made to the cultural and economic development of Ontario and Canada. Our province has become enriched because our Italians friends on coming here have brought with them their love of art, music, architecture and education. More than that, they have strengthened the pillars of our multicultural society by adding their traditional respect for hard work and family life. We have benefited greatly from their participation in sports, business, professions and, more recently, government and law.

To celebrate this day, I am honoured to recognize in the gallery a representative of the Italian government. His name is Deputy Consul General Paolo Scoccimarro. To him I say today, *viva Italia* and *viva Canada*.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Later today I will be introducing a bill to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act. I am proposing amendments which would give teachers across the province control of the college and make teaching a truly self-governing profession.

I am introducing a private member's bill that would increase the percentage of elected members of the College of Teachers council to 75%. Also, in order for the council or its committees to hold meetings, they would each have to have a quorum of a majority of elected members. If the bill passes, the council would elect one of its members to be the chair of the council. As members know, the elected members of the council are elected by teachers across

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 2 juin 1998

Ontario and the appointed members are chosen by the provincial government.

My bill would make the Ontario College of Teachers accountable and responsive to the teachers of the province. It would ensure the decisions of the college which affect all teachers could not be made without a majority of elected members of the council or its committees present.

The New Democratic Party recognizes the wider community in Ontario must be represented on the council of the College of Teachers but believes that teachers must provide policy direction for the profession. Questions related to teacher certification and competency and disciplinary cases should not be decided by a college where the council has the majority of non-elected, appointed members. Teachers should be the majority on the council. New Democrats are committed to ensuring the Ontario College of Teachers —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

ITALIAN NATIONAL DAY

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): Today I'm very proud to speak on behalf of the Italian members of our caucus, the members for Simcoe Centre, Ottawa-Carleton and York Centre, in celebrating our national day marking the foundation of the modern republic of Italy.

Italian National Day is a time when all Canadians can reflect on the tremendous and varied contributions to Canada made by Italians in this country, who made this their adoptive home as far back as 1497, starting with Giovanni Caboto.

Millions of Italians have come to this country, including my two grandfathers, Giuseppe Spina in 1921, and Giuseppe Sicoli in 1911, my own father, Geniale Spina, in 1929 and my mother, Linda, in 1937.

Besides myself as an MPP, we're proud that other members of our family have also made a contribution to this Parliament in terms of my cousin's two sons, Andrew Carricato, who served as a page in 1995, and currently in the House today, Anthony Carricato, who is a page for this session.

Thanks to Canadians of Italian background, Italian culture and traditions have been ably transplanted here to enrich the lives of all the citizens of our country. On behalf of the government of Premier Mike Harris, I congratulate and thank not only our ancestors who brought us and allowed us to make a contribution to this country, but all of the Italian Canadian community for their contribution to Ontario and Canada.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANTS

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I want to take the opportunity today to call on the Minister of Health to increase the funding for the northern health travel grant program, a program that is absolutely crucial for people in northwestern Ontario requiring specialized health care in southern Ontario, but a program that no longer meets the needs of many of my constituents.

The problem, as many of my northern colleagues will know, is that the distances between most communities in northwestern Ontario and Toronto are so great that patients needing care must almost always travel by air. But the cost of air fare has increased dramatically in the past three years while the subsidy for travel under the program has remained the same. Minister, is it not fair to at least make adjustments based on that reality? Because the truth is many people can simply not afford the upfront costs required and, as a result, I fear that some are not receiving the treatment they should.

There are other areas in which the system must be changed. A constituent told my office today that she went to Toronto for treatment in October 1997 yet did not get reimbursed until April of this year, a six-month delay. Surely this can be speeded up. As you know, Minister, we do not yet have an MRI in Thunder Bay, although we're hopeful we will have one in place soon.

But until we have an MRI in place, can you not acknowledge the fact that many people in Thunder Bay find travelling to Duluth, Minnesota, for their MRI more convenient and far less stressful? Can you not allow people to use those services a mere three-and-a-half-hour drive from Thunder Bay and make them for the first time eligible for northern health travel grant assistance?

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Today is the second anniversary of the tragic death of Theresa Vince. Theresa Vince had been sexually harassed in her workplace and finally murdered.

Yesterday at a press conference her daughter, Jacquie Carr, said this:

"Sexual harassment belongs on the continuum of sexual violence and should be treated with the utmost seriousness. If it's effectively dealt with, then they can diminish the consequences or divert them altogether."

There was an inquest into the death of Theresa Vince last December and there were several recommendations made as a result of that very sad inquest. What we found out was that she had complained and spoken of her difficulties and nothing was done.

A couple of those recommendations are being made to this government, and this government has refused to act. One of them is to move the complaints process into the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which I personally think is a good idea. The people at the press conference yesterday called for that.

The Solicitor General yesterday said that he wanted to move slowly and carefully. I can appreciate that, but on the other hand this should be done now. Sexual harassment is not a joke — it can lead to very serious consequences — and I ask the government to act immediately.

1340

HAMILTON TOWNSHIP FARMERS'
MUTUAL FIRE INSURANCE CO

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): For a corporation to celebrate their 100th anniversary is indeed a very special milestone. On May 16, I attended the 100th anniversary celebration of the Hamilton Township Farmers' Mutual Fire Insurance Co.

This successful insurance company started in May 1898 as a way to protect farmers from the threat of fire in the small township of Hamilton, located in Northumberland county. One hundred years ago, insurance companies were not interested in taking on farmers as clients. There was no way to assess the value of a farm, and it was a big risk to insurance companies to provide the farmers with coverage.

Now the company is a growing and a thriving business, not only in Hamilton township but right across Ontario. It is run very efficiently by their president, Scott Robinson, and the general manager, Ross Thompson. All of the employees have undoubtedly put in countless hours of dedicated service and have provided immeasurable benefit to the community and to the citizens of Ontario.

I applaud the Hamilton Township Farmers' Mutual Fire Insurance Co on a wonderful milestone. This demonstrates how successful small business can be in Ontario.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): This morning the London Free Press reported on a survey of school bus drivers who counted 218 vehicles that passed a school bus while red lights were flashing and children were getting on or off the bus. Let me put that in perspective for you. In one city, over a four-day period, there were 218 times that children were at risk, and yet the government will do little to solve the problem.

Last week, with great fanfare, the acting Solicitor General crowed about his initiative to create community safety zones to protect children. The minister said, "There are too many irresponsible drivers who are just not getting the message." I agree. But your government is also not getting the message. Increased fines do nothing to stop these offending drivers. In the words of Mike Murphy, owner of a London area bus company, "Bus drivers were not reporting all the incidents because it happens so often." They also know that without a clear description of the driver they cannot get a conviction.

In the last session, this government refused to pass Bill 78, which would have introduced vehicle liability. We constantly see more evidence that the current law is not

working. Increasing fines has not worked. Vehicle liability is the only means of stopping those who show no regard for the safety of the 810,000 children who ride the school buses every day. Introduce vehicle liability.

ITALIAN NATIONAL DAY

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Today I too rise to commemorate the particular importance of Italian National Day and want to say, with great pride because of my cultural heritage, that I mark this day and that I ask members to join with me in marking this particular day.

As a country, Italy is only 52 years old, but as a culture, it is much older and much deeper than that. Probably the greatest strength that the country has offered has been the strength of its people; the ability to go through incredible change; the fact that it has gone from a constitutional monarchy to a republic today, but more significantly than that, the fact that it has developed into one of the most industrialized countries in the world with a relatively high standard of living paralleled by very few countries across the world, and a country whose people seem to know how to adapt continuously to change.

One of the interesting changes that is going on now is major discussion in Italy about making changes to the electoral system, making changes to the way in which they govern themselves, and particularly, Italy is playing a leading role in the movement towards one European currency and a greater closeness among the European countries.

But it is also important to note, particularly today, the great contributions of Italians throughout the world, because that has been one of the contributions that Italy has made, that is, to send to the four corners of the world Italians so that we too can partake, in this country, in rejoicing in today's event.

LEAHYS OF LAKEFIELD

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough): I rise today to bring the attention of this House to the achievements of a remarkable family of performers in my riding of Hastings-Peterborough, the Leahys of Lakefield, Ontario.

Since 1825, six generations of Leahys have called Lakefield home. The present generation numbers 11 children, all of whom are involved with the group. Their parents, Frank, an accomplished fiddle player, and Julie, a champion step dancer, encouraged all the children to sing, dance and learn to play at least one instrument.

The Leahys' unique interpretations of Celtic and Canadian folk music and French Canadian step dancing, as well as their mastery of traditional instruments such as fiddle, piano, mandolin, guitar, drums, keyboards and saxophone, attest to the many years they have spent developing their talents.

During the 1970s, some of the family members were already performing at weddings and fairs and competing professionally on the fiddler circuit, but it was not until

1996 that nine members of the family decided to present the Leahy style of music, song and dance to a wider audience, first with a self-titled album, Leahy, later picked up, promoted and distributed by Virgin Records, and then a series of television appearances and performances at Irish and Celtic festivals in both the US and Canada.

The Leahys were honoured by the Canadian music industry this past March with two Junos for best new group and instrumental artist of the year. They are the opening act on Shania Twain's North American tour, which kicked off in Sudbury recently, and will be appearing on their own CBC special on Sunday, June 14. I encourage all Ontarians to watch this wonderful family as they bring their host of talents to your homes and communities.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to seek unanimous consent to wear the blue and gold ribbon here in support of the May 30 to June 6 campaign to raise awareness about violence, organized by the Catholic Women's League, Thunder Bay diocese. This campaign hopes that by raising awareness of positive actions and values that promote harmonious communities —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Okay, let me just seek unanimous consent. For today, unanimous consent to wear the ribbon? Agreed? I heard a no.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHILD CARE SUPPLEMENT INFORMATION COLLECTION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA COLLECTE DES RENSEIGNEMENTS NÉCESSAIRES À L'OCTROI DU SUPPLÉMENT DE REVENU POUR LES FRAIS DE GARDE D'ENFANTS

Mr Eves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 28, An Act to permit the Collection of Personal Information for the Payment of the Ontario Child Care Supplement for Working Families / Projet de loi 28, Loi permettant la collecte de renseignements personnels en vue du versement du supplément de revenu de l'Ontario pour les familles travailleuses ayant des frais de garde d'enfants.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Just a very brief comment, Mr Speaker. This bill, if enacted, would permit the collection of sufficient personal information to determine individuals' eligibility for the Ontario child care supplement for working families announced in the 1998 budget. It provides that the

information collected must be destroyed if the legislation establishing the supplement has not been enacted by March 31, 1999, and it repeals the authority to collect this information effective April 1, 1999.

The Ontario child care supplement will provide support to some 350,000 young children in working families in the province of Ontario.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TEACHERS AMENDMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ORDRE DES ENSEIGNANTES ET DES ENSEIGNANTS DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Wildman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 29, An Act to increase teacher representation at the Ontario College of Teachers and to make other amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 / *Projet de loi 29, Loi visant à accroître la représentation des enseignants au sein de l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario et apportant d'autres modifications à la Loi de 1996 sur l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): This bill amends the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996. The composition of the council of the college is changed, increasing the proportion of elected members of the college so that they will make up 75% of the council. Provisions are added to provide that the council or a committee will not have a quorum unless a majority of the elected council members are present. The council will be required to elect one of its members to be the chair. All committees will be required to have a majority of elected council members. A provision is added requiring the prescribed requirements for the issuance of a certificate of qualification and registration to include requirements that a one-year teacher education program and a one-year paid internship program be successfully completed.

1350

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR UNE TOLÉRANCE ZÉRO EN MATIÈRE D'ABUS DE SUBSTANCES

Mr Young moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to promote zero tolerance for substance abuse by children / *Projet de loi 30, Loi encourageant une tolérance zéro concernant l'abus de substances par des enfants.*

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): Recent events in Ontario have demonstrated once again a need for action on substance abuse by our youth. Just last week in

my own riding, 14 young people, most of them students, were charged with drug trafficking at a high school. A summer weekend doesn't go by that we don't hear about teenage accidents or deaths related to drugs or alcohol. We've been a society in denial.

My bill addresses this insidious problem by focusing the responsibility for curtailing substance abuse on students and their parents, with support in our schools.

MAIMONIDES SCHOOLS FOR JEWISH STUDIES ACT, 1998

Mrs Ross moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr7, An Act respecting Maimonides Schools for Jewish Studies.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wonder if I could ask the government member why he opposes the raise-values-about-violence campaign?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, order. Member for Port Arthur, you sought unanimous consent and you didn't get it. That's just the way it goes.

Motions?

Mr Gravelle: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Member for Port Arthur, I'll hear a point of order, but I don't want to hear a point of order on the same thing.

Mr Gravelle: I seek unanimous consent to ask for an explanation as to why that is the case.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, I appreciate the fact that you're a dean of the rules, but the fact is, they don't have to give an explanation. It's just a "yes" or a "no."

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Port Arthur, I'm not debating with you.

Motions? No motions?

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I'm very pleased today to advise members of the Legislature that the Ontario Disability Support Program Act was proclaimed on June 1, yesterday. This government has kept yet another promise. We have created a separate income support program for people with disabilities that meets their unique needs. One more important commitment of the Common Sense

Revolution has been realized for the benefit of these Ontarians.

For many years, people with disabilities in Ontario have said that their needs were not being met through the welfare system. They said that it was time for governments to focus on the supports that they required to participate fully in Ontario society. Our government agreed. We decided that people with disabilities and those who worked with them were the best possible advisers we could have in developing this new legislation and the new program. We've consulted over the past two years. We've listened and we've heard their messages.

They said it was unacceptable for them to be in a category that labelled some of them as permanently unemployable. They told us that the new program must be flexible and sensitive, and recognize fully that disabilities are diverse, unique, complex and often changing.

They called for employment supports with a focus on abilities instead of disabilities, on the possibilities instead of the limitations, and on their opportunities instead of impairments.

The heart of the ODSP is a comprehensive and flexible definition of disability. The eligibility criteria recognize substantial mental or physical impairments that are continuous or recurrent and that are expected to last for a year or more.

The criteria also recognize restrictions in the activities of daily living in one or more of three areas: personal care, functioning in the community or in the workplace. This ends the automatic assessments and reassessments of disability that had occurred which were both demeaning to those individuals and also wasteful of scarce resources.

This new program removes people with disabilities from the welfare system, where they should never have been in the first place, and it creates for them an entirely separate system of income support. In addition, all those who were eligible as persons with disabilities or because of age under the old family benefits definition are being grandparented into the new program.

Improved supports for independence are a key feature of the Ontario disability support program. It provides for much more generous rules, for financial assets and for contributions made by families of people with disabilities.

ODSP supports to employment focus solely on the needs of people with disabilities who want to prepare for employment, find work and keep a job. These supports provide people with disabilities with real help in overcoming barriers to seeking, obtaining and keeping employment. When the new system is fully in place, spending on employment supports will almost double, from roughly \$18 million today to close to \$35 million. And the rules will also allow for the rapid reinstatement of income support if a job doesn't work out — a very distinct and significant improvement.

The members of this government are very proud of the Ontario disability support program. We have begun to phase in its implementation and we're taking the time to do it right.

The Ontario disability support program meets all the criteria we set for public policies and programs in the Common Sense Revolution. ODSP is fair and accountable to the people it is designed to serve: those with disabilities who are in need of income support, those with disabilities who are able and want to work. It also respects taxpayers' dollars.

This is an initiative that has been very well received by the community that serves people with disabilities. Yesterday the president of the Ontario March of Dimes, Mr Duncan Read, said his organization has supported the ODSP and worked with the government throughout its development. He said: "What's positive is the program's recognition that people with disabilities have the desire and the ability to work. The removal of the label 'permanently unemployable' and the elimination of a financial penalty if attempts at employment fail are fundamental to persons with disabilities achieving independence."

The proclamation of the Ontario disability support program marks the start of a new era of fairer treatment and more opportunity for people with disabilities.

In closing, I would like to thank the staff at my ministry for their hard and excellent work at bringing this program into being and also to most especially thank those individuals with disabilities and those who act on their behalf for their excellent advice and counsel in bringing this new program into being.

1400

SENIORS' MONTH

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): Earlier today the Premier and I had the pleasure of officially launching the government's Seniors' Month activities in honour of the almost one and a half million Ontarians who built our province and continue to make a meaningful contribution to our society.

We were joined by the members for Essex South and London Centre who participated in this important and joyous occasion. We were also supported by the Burlington Seniors Choir. Their stirring rendition of O Canada, I'm told, caused all three caucuses to rise in this building. That's how loud and how strong and how wonderful they were.

I want to acknowledge as well our country's most recent Order of Canada recipient, Gordie Tapp, who was master of ceremonies and who is with us in the House today; radio personality Earl Warren; and Lieutenant Ted Lancefield, a Second World War veteran who was featured as the senior in our Seniors' Month poster that was unveiled earlier. Could all of them stand up?

The government's efforts to expand and improve the quality of long-term-care health services represent our heartfelt appreciation for the contributions that seniors have made to the quality of life in Ontario.

This government has listened to seniors' suggestions and responded with very important initiatives, such as the 43 new community care access centres. During last year's Seniors' Month we announced an annual funding increase

of \$100 million to enhance the services in long-term-care facilities.

After an eight-year period in which no new long-term-care beds were added to the system, this government has addressed the waiting list for our seniors. On April 20, my colleague the Minister of Health announced 1,700 temporary long-term-care beds as part of our strategy to make better use of hospital beds. On April 29, the Premier announced \$1.2 billion to expand facilities and community long-term-care beds. Twenty thousand new long-term-care beds will be added to the system over the next eight years and tendering has already begun on the first 6,700 new beds. This funding will create 27,500 new front-line health care jobs in Ontario.

As we expand the long-term-care system, there is an opportunity to make life in these facilities more homelike for our seniors. We all recognize how difficult it must be for those seniors who live separately from their spouses for no other reason than because of a waiting list at the facility where one spouse already resides.

Today I am announcing these regulatory changes under the Nursing Homes Act, the Homes for the Aged and Rest Homes Act and the Charitable Institutions Act. Starting June 15, a person applying to join his or her spouse in a long-term-care facility in Ontario will be placed in a higher category for admission. Only persons in crisis circumstances and those who are at risk if they don't get admitted immediately will be given a higher priority.

This change will assist spouses currently living in the community who need facility care, as well as someone who might temporarily have to be admitted to another long-term-care facility before joining his or her spouse in the preferred facility of their choice.

Although this problem occurs relatively infrequently, when it does occur it is a major problem for the couple and for the loved ones around them. As family caregivers continue to support their parents when they move from a community setting to a facility, it is more considerate for our system to recognize the importance and the added convenience for all family members to visit their parents and grandparents together.

In this spirit, we launch Seniors' Month with the first of four weekly themes:

Intergenerational Week is a salute to everyone in Ontario who is working to bring seniors and youth together. United Generations Ontario has done outstanding work in this regard. Supporting, mentoring and grandbuddying programs are all prevalent in our province. Several representatives have been in the House with us today.

Next week is Caregivers' Week, where we pay tribute to the real angels of our health care system: those family members who care for a frail spouse or for another loved one.

During Safety and Security Week we will address difficult issues like elder abuse and fraud.

Finally, during Volunteerism Week we will have a celebration of the outstanding efforts in communities for all of our seniors.

This month's activities will set the stage for 1999. That is the year the United Nations has declared will be the International Year of Older Persons. At this time, I would like to thank the countless seniors' organizations that have offered their suggestions on how to properly celebrate this important year.

Our government has asked Mrs Lois Neely, past chair of the Toronto Mayor's Committee on Aging, to represent Ontario on the Canada coordinating committee for this year's activities. Mrs Neely is also in the gallery with us today.

This government is deeply committed to improving the quality of life for Ontario seniors. Along with our enhancements to long-term care, we've added 525 new products to the Ontario drug benefit plan. We've started the most ambitious pneumonia-prevention vaccination program in North America and reinvested new health care dollars into priority services like cancer care, cardiac care, kidney dialysis and breast cancer screening. We launched an important study to determine the shelter needs of abused older women for the first time in the province. We redressed the unfair treatment of widows under the workers' compensation system. A safer and simpler driver's licence renewal system is now in place for seniors over 80. We've made retiree discounts on seniors' auto insurance premiums mandatory.

I join all members of the Legislature in paying tribute to Ontario's 1.5-million seniors, not just in June but in every month of the year. It is our way of saying thank you to our seniors who built a province that is the envy of the world.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): When we learned that the Minister of Community and Social Services was making a statement today relating to people with disabilities, my caucus was expecting the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. We're not getting that today. Again, every individual in Ontario today affiliated with any advocacy group has been asking the government for months on end for some kind of response on the Ontario Disability Act.

The ODSP plan that was proclaimed yesterday and is now in effect in Ontario in essence wants people to move into the workforce, and what better way to help people do that than to advance the Ontario with Disability Act. Just two weeks ago, all MPPs in this House received packages from their local groups asking them, begging them to take them back to the Premier to honour his commitment made during the last election that he would be bringing this act forward, yet he has not.

The minister today reaffirmed that the most critical one word in that statement is the word "substantial." Will people be substantially disabled in order to qualify? This is the government that refused the Liberal amendment to allow a medical professional to be the one to make that designation because any supervisor in any office can make

that determination under this government's legislation, nad this minister continues to operate in a vacuum without realizing what other ministries of this government are now doing to the disabled community in Ontario. We have to talk about social housing; we have to talk about special services at home. The elderly parents who have helped their adult children and keep them at home are now suffering cuts by this same government that purports to be in favour of those with disabilities.

We cannot let this go by without saying that as late as last week, for those with disabilities, people they deal with to help them get into the workforce, vocational rehab was going to be privatized. Now it's not going to be privatized. These same counsellors had layoff notices. Maybe they won't be laid off. There is complete chaos within this very ministry, constant change so that the employee themselves don't know if they're coming or going, yet this minister today says that they're doing the best they can for the disabled. I want to say on behalf of my party that they are not doing enough, nor are they doing it well.

SENIORS' MONTH

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I want to say in a non-partisan way that we want to join you and everyone in this Legislature in paying tribute to the seniors of Ontario at this, the beginning of Seniors' Month in Ontario. It has been mentioned that this week is Intergenerational Week, where we encourage the younger generation to interact with seniors and vice versa, the seniors to contact those younger people and bring them into their lives so that both can be better enriched and educated about the others' feelings about themselves.

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After that we have Caregivers Week. A lot has been said about the care of the frail and the elderly in our province and a lot has been said about those who work in that field. Many of them work for wages and under circumstances that we wouldn't want to, but the bottom line is that they have a dedication, a conscious, compassionate dedication in taking care of the seniors and the frail elderly in our province.

Safety and security, of course, are always on everyone's mind. Yesterday in my statement I raised the ugly question of elder abuse in this province, of abuse by spouses, abuse by family members, both physical and psychological. I think we have to set our direction towards solving that problem and helping those who are less able to help themselves to care for themselves.

Of course the final week of Seniors' Month will be Volunteerism Week. The volunteers who serve our elderly and seniors in this province are invaluable, and we should give all the recognition we can to their efforts.

This will go beyond, I hope, just the month of June, that we will all year think of the seniors in our province, what they have contributed to our past and what they are still able to contribute to our future, that every day we'll be thinking of those thousands of seniors who live on the

edge of poverty and will bring them into our hearts and into our consciences.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I want to respond to the Minister of Community and Social Services on the Ontario disability support plan. The minister and members of the government caucus will know that I and my caucus have supported the implementation of this plan. I have said on a number of occasions how strong our support is, but also where we have some cautionary comments and where we'd like to ensure that implementation goes smoothly.

But I have to say that this is the third or so time the minister has announced this in the House and I'm getting tired of having to stand up and support her. I wish she'd quit it. As I understand it, she told us today that she has proclaimed the bill, but they're phasing in the implementation, so I suspect we're going to have a few more of these announcements. I understand that yesterday they didn't proclaim the employment supports section of the bill. That is an incredibly important section of the legislation and of the plan, and I would hope — I'm sure — the ministry is scurrying quickly to bring all the needed regulations and mechanisms into place and that the minister will be moving ahead very quickly with that. I tell her she doesn't need to wait to have another date to come into the House and announce it. She could just go ahead and do that.

I too want to pay tribute to the ministry staff who have worked on this. It's an incredible product. I think they have worked extremely well with members of the disability community. Members of the community, who have long awaited such a plan, have put a lot of time and energy and heart and soul into the development of this plan and they've worked well with the ministry staff, who have produced an excellent product for all of us as legislators. I'm pleased to pay tribute to them.

I want to indicate that there are a couple of things we'll be watching as this is implemented. There remains concern, despite the assurances we heard today from the minister, that all those who are currently receiving disability supports will be grandparented. There are people who are currently on general welfare awaiting family benefits approval for disability, people who are in the stream. Assurances have been made centrally, but at the regional or area office level there is a great concern that those are not being lived up to, and I would ask the minister to keep a close eye on that.

I have to say that we also remain concerned about some of those people who were in the category of permanently unemployable. While I support what the minister has said, that persons with physical disabilities have wanted to find ways back into the workforce and not to be labelled as permanently unemployable, there are some people who may not even be physically permanently unemployable but who may be socially or economically disabled to the point

of being permanently unemployable, or to such a degree that the kinds of supports they require to have a hope or an opportunity of returning to employment are much greater than anything the minister has envisioned or put in place. Those people are being cut out of the disability system and are being put on to Ontario Works. There is a great concern about what will happen to them, particularly if they are unable to live up to the obligations of the Ontario Works plan.

There is still a remaining concern about the interpretation of the definition of disability and eligibility requirements. It's not so much in the words; it's in how it is interpreted and how it is applied. There has been an anecdotal sense that there has been a tightening up not just of the purse-strings but of the interpretation of eligibility. I think the minister will have to watch that closely.

I too think it is very important while praising this, on the other hand to say to the government, you have failed miserably with respect to the issue of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. I know the Minister of Citizenship has said that she is working on a plan, that a proposal will be coming forward. The commitment was within your mandate of office. We are three years into that at this point in time and there has been no plan out there. We need considerable consultation with the community. I am hopeful that we will see that come forward in the very near future.

SENIORS' MONTH

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I am pleased to join with others here to congratulate the seniors of the province as we begin Seniors' Month. We in the New Democratic Party will be participating in activities in our communities, and one of the things we will be doing is talking with those seniors and bringing their voices here: those seniors who are finding it difficult to manage because of the copayment on drugs; those seniors who are finding it difficult to keep their homes because of the increase in their property taxes; those seniors who are finding it difficult to deal with home care at home with the constant reductions that have occurred because of the cutbacks in hospitals that have resulted in a flood of subacute patients taking over the long-term care. We also will be there with those families who now will not be able to have their seniors admitted to long-term care at home because of the change the minister has announced today.

ANNUAL REPORT, OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg to inform the House I have today laid upon the table the annual report of the Ombudsman for the period of April 1, 1997, to March 31, 1998, and the Ombudsman is in fact in the gallery today.

Is there any chance that the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale is going to be here? I would like to rule on his private member's bill. Then I will hold that ruling. I tell

the member for Algoma, I will hold the ruling until tomorrow I think.

MEMBER'S PRIVILEGE

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Yesterday the member for Scarborough-Agincourt raised a point of privilege relating to the questions asked by him and by the member for Lambton, during oral questions on May 27 and 28, of the Minister of Natural Resources, relating to Ipperwash Provincial Park.

The member for Scarborough-Agincourt alleged, in effect, that the member for Lambton and the Minister of Natural Resources combined in the design of a question on the subject of Ipperwash, and the response to it, in a way that would lead listeners to the view that he had misled the House on the previous day or, at the very least, that the essence of his question was based upon inaccurate information and that this incompleteness had the effect of portraying a misleading picture, whether deliberate or not. By planning this "attack," as the member termed it, and by refusing to respond to his questions, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt asserted that he was being obstructed in his ability to perform his parliamentary duties and therefore his privileges had been breached.

Having been in the chair during these events, I am fully aware of what transpired that causes the member for Scarborough-Agincourt to raise his point.

With respect to his concern that the Minister of Natural Resources has declined to answer his questions during question period but did answer the questions of the member for Lambton, I say that complaints of this type have been commonly raised. The Speaker, however, possesses no authority to compel ministers to answer questions; indeed, the standing orders explicitly allow ministers the discretion to decline to answer questions altogether. Therefore, the member's grievance on this issue enjoys no recourse.

On the issue of the competing views that exist concerning the underlying veracity of the comments of the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, the member for Lambton or the Minister of Natural Resources, again the Speaker possesses no ability to address the matter. As the presiding officer, I must assume that all members are honourable members, that all members speak truthfully in this House, and indeed I am bound to call to order, and sanction if necessary, any member who accuses another member otherwise. I believe that circumstances such as the member for Scarborough-Agincourt has brought forward fall into the category of reasonable people having to agree to disagree, and otherwise drawing their own private conclusions beyond that. In the absence of a clearly unparliamentary statement, it is beyond my jurisdiction to select one member's version of accuracy over that of another member. In my role as Speaker, I must assume both views are accurate, each honestly arrived at through different or opposite analysis of the information at hand, each honestly held and each equally valid.

As is often the case when heated and controversial issues are debated in this House, the form of that debate and the conduct of the members may not always cast this Legislature in the noblest light; all of this is in the nature, the culture, of this place, and certainly does not constitute a breach of the members' privileges.

I cannot find that any of the issues complained of by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt impeded his ability to perform his parliamentary duties. I therefore find that a *prima facie* case of privilege has not been made out.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Chair of Management Board. Minister, I want to return to the issue I raised with you yesterday. You will know that an issue of grave concern to every member in this Legislature is the fact, as alleged, that apparently the man who was given responsibility to run a competition for the winning of a contract worth hundreds of millions of dollars also had a financial connection with one of the bidders, and as it turns out, that same bidder won the competition.

You said yesterday that you hadn't had enough time to look into this matter. Another 24 hours has transpired. I'm asking you today to tell us what you have learned and whether in fact Mr French was indeed in a position of conflict of interest.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): First of all, your preamble is factually incorrect. Mr French, Coopers and Lybrand, did not run the selection process. They were hired to give advice on this independent process, which was very similar to the NDP process that was set in place, where you have a selection committee, you have expert panels to give advice on different criteria of the request for proposals and then you have a review team.

The allegation that has been raised — unlike other innuendo and muckraking, this innuendo is very, very serious. As a result, I've asked the Ontario Casino Corp to look into the matter and give me a report on that. So far, I have not received their completed report. I will wait until I get that completed report, and when I do, I'll make it public and we can take the appropriate action at that time if it is deemed to be true.

Mr McGuinty: I want to ask you this, then. First of all, the question here is very simple. I don't really understand why it is that you have to ask for a complicated report that takes a lot of time to provide. Did Mr French have a conflict of interest here or not? Did he have a financial connection with one of the bidders at the same time that he was offering advice, as you put it, to the Ontario Casino Corp? That's a very simple issue. Was he in a position of conflict or not? Yes or no?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The Leader of the Opposition must realize that this isn't just a simple little matter. I've asked the Ontario Casino Corp to look into this matter. I know that he and all members in this House would want to have the facts and want to have a completed report from the OCC so they can base their decisions and their opinions not just on rumour and innuendo but on a full report from the Ontario Casino Corp.

Mr McGuinty: I think, Minister, that if you treated this matter with the seriousness it deserves, you would have an answer for us here today on that very issue.

Tell me something else. I understand that your officials are continuing to address this contract, to negotiate the contract and to determine which company is going to get the contract. Do you not feel that under the circumstances here, in light of all the questions that are being raised regarding this contract — is it not appropriate, is it not prudent, is it not responsible to put a freeze on those negotiations until we get to the bottom of this? Will you at least provide us with that assurance, that you have now directed your officials to put a freeze on all of this until the necessary information is put before this House?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The specific innuendo is serious, and it's because it's so serious that we want to take our time. I've asked the Ontario Casino Corp to give me a full report on the specific innuendo. When we get that full report, we'll make our decisions based on the facts. If it weren't so serious we could carry on like the opposition do and just throw all kinds of accusations against the wall regardless of the consequences. It's because it's a serious innuendo that's being raised here that I've asked the OCC and their legal counsel to give me a full report.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My second question's also for Chair of Management Board. I thought it was appropriate that while we're talking about money and influence, we should talk about your plans to buy the next Ontario election. You have a proposal you are putting forward that is going to double the amount a candidate will need to spend to run in a provincial election. You're going to change the rules and stack the deck so that you can spend piles of dough to buy the next election. On top of all of that, you're going to fire the referee who's in charge of this whole undertaking.

My question for you is very simple. Why are you so intent on exposing Ontario to the kinds of money-style politics that are so prevalent in the United States of America?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I know the Leader of the Opposition likes to throw accusations around and use scare tactics. He knows full well that what's taking place here was directed by the House leaders, the member for St Catharines and the member of the NDP and our House leader, to allow for the parties to get together and discuss the results of the election finances committee report.

That was an all-party report. You had two representatives from your party and the NDP had two members of their party; the chair was Jack Murray, a past provincial secretary of the New Democratic Party, and our party appointed two. So the opposition got five votes out of seven. They issued a report that your House leaders gave responsibility — you delegated a representative from your party to meet with me. We met once last week; we're going to meet again tomorrow night.

If you have no confidence in who you selected to discuss these changes, why don't you tell your representative that you don't want him talking about this? You have no confidence in his ability to take back to caucus what's going on, so you ask these silly questions.

Mr McGuinty: You are talking about bringing about some very dramatic changes to Ontario. You want to change the way we govern ourselves when it comes to campaign rules. You want to change the amounts we can spend and the amounts of money we can raise. I take serious issue with that.

No matter who lends advice to us in this Legislature, ultimately we have to assume responsibility for any rule changes. We have a very good history when it comes to these matters in this province. That history says that none of these proposals can go forward without all-party agreement.

My question to you is very simple: Will you now stand up and provide us with your assurance that no changes of any kind will go forward affecting election rules in election spending unless you have all-party consent?

Hon Mr Hodgson: If you have no confidence in your House leader, tell him so. You instructed your House leader two weeks ago, who gave directions to one of your caucus members, to have meetings on this issue to discuss the report of the Commission on Election Finances. This was an all-party commission that worked on this for five or six years. They recognized that the act hasn't been changed since 1986 and that changes have taken place in the way elections are held, as well as inflation and the GST and other factors. They deliberated on this a long time.

You've publicly stated you have no confidence in your party's representation in that process, and now you're stating before the House that you have no confidence in your representative to our private meeting to discuss this.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Final supplementary.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): Back to the issue at hand: The history in this House and the federal House with respect to election finance reform, with respect to electoral reform, has required unanimous party consent at the time the legislation was brought forward. Last week what you presented was a compendium of changes that have been proposed over the last seven years that were dealt with separately and not together. This is the first time this discussion has ever happened. Indeed, one of your proposals is to do away with one of the commissions, the finances commission, that has recommended some of these changes.

1430

Before we proceed, before you try to put all these seats up for sale to the highest bidder, will you assure this House and the people of this province that there will be unanimity between the current parties in this House today before you bring forward any legislation that attempts to amend any statute governing the fair and responsible electoral process in this province?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm sure we all want to hear the response, and it's very difficult.

Hon Mr Hodgson: If the opposition doesn't want to carry on with their House leaders' directions to have meetings on this to discuss —

Interjections.

The Speaker: The members for Essex South and Windsor-Walkerville, come to order. Ottawa Centre, come to order.

Hon Mr Hodgson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The opposition obviously doesn't want to follow their House leaders' directions to have meetings with party representatives to discuss their recommendations, which have been deliberated on for a number of years by the Commission on Election Finances, or to look at recommendations from the chief electoral officer, who had suggestions on how to streamline the process to do away with duplication and bureaucracy and save the taxpayers money. If they want to make political hay on this —

Interjections.

Hon Mr Hodgson: Obviously, the opposition, the Liberals in particular, want to get their spin lines out on this. They don't want to do the hard work of meeting to set up a process —

Interjections.

Hon Mr Hodgson: The Liberal Party and the opposition know that the Election Finances Act hasn't been changed since 1986 — 12 years. They know there's been a process, that the election commission has deliberated over this. Now they ask for unanimity. They can't even agree on the process that we were going to set up to discuss this. The member for Renfrew North calls to introduce the act. His House leader calls for a process where we could discuss and consult the recommendations according to the tradition of this House. If they don't want to do that process, they can instruct our House leaders on the process they would like to take.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health and it concerns the announcement of hospital funding for this year.

Minister, we've heard no announcement from you about hospital funding, no statement in the Legislature. Instead, you quietly sent out a letter on May 25 to hospitals across the province in effect telling them that their budget is being cut by another \$200 million this year. What it means is that in three years you have now taken \$1 billion out of hospital budgets. Can you tell us how it is

that your government can afford to give the wealthiest people in Ontario a tax gift, a \$5.5-billion tax scheme, but you don't have \$200 million to help hospitals with their budgets this year?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): It's important to first of all indicate that the individuals who are getting tax refunds or rebates, however we want to word it, are not those people who are rich. They are the people who earn \$25,000 up to about \$70,000. I think it's important to at least set the record straight.

Having now established the fact that it is those people who receive the greatest refund, if we take a look at the hospital funding, it's important to also take into consideration the fact that we have been meeting with the Ontario Hospital Association. We've also been meeting with individual hospitals. We are requesting additional information regarding funding and we will be making those announcements. We have certainly been reinvesting in our hospitals in the past two years as well.

Mr Hampton: I find it interesting that the Minister of Health in this province has more to say in defending the government's tax scheme than she has to say about defending the budgets of hospitals.

The letter you sent acknowledges that hospitals are facing \$200 million in additional costs. Your letter acknowledges that. But then you tell them that to cover that \$200 million they should go inside, that they should in effect cut hospital programs to cover the \$200 million in additional costs. That's what you're doing.

I want to read the reply from the president of the Ontario Hospital Association to you. It says:

"Many hospital boards will have no choice except to begin immediately the process of reducing services in order to live within their operating plans. We believe that this process could cause immediate and substantial media and public concern over consumer access and service."

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mr Hampton: Minister, I ask you again. You've got money to finance a tax scheme that's mainly going to benefit the wealthy. Why can't you help —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mrs Witmer: We have been helping the hospitals. In fact, as you know, originally it was scheduled that there would be a reduction for three years, and we've made it known that there will be no third-year reduction. That money will stay in the hospital budgets. It's also important to know that we have reinvested \$350 million into hospital-based programs and services. Recently, when we received a report of the emergency task force, we indicated that we were reinvesting \$225 million to ensure that the support was going to be there for hospitals.

I would stress again that we are continuing to meet with the Ontario Hospital Association. We are meeting with individual hospitals. Certainly we are doing more for hospitals than any previous government to ensure that the priorities, services and programs that people need are going to be provided.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

1440

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): You're certainly doing more to hospitals than any other government. There's no question about that.

Minister, you know this is a cut. You know you announced that you were not going to implement a \$500-million cut, but you also know that the new costs that are associated with items like the cap on the OHIP technical fees, which amounts to \$120 million, and the recent Ontario Nurses' Association contract award of \$76 million — the hospitals have to meet this from within existing budgets. They also have to use those dollars you talked about for emergency procedures to improve their services in that area. This amounts to a cut. There's absolutely no way you can get away with continuing to pretend that your government is not cutting hospitals.

Minister, did you even read the letter from the president of the OHA? What are you going to do to stop the cuts to hospital services that are going to result from this edict which was secretly put out?

Hon Mrs Witmer: If you take a look at the letters that did go out to the hospitals, they indicate that there is absolutely no decrease in the hospital base allocations for 1998-99. It also stresses the fact that we are continuing to meet with the hospitals in order that we can continue to make priority reinvestments into the hospitals.

I think also we need to emphasize the fact that hospitals in this province actually suffered more under both the Liberals and the NDP. In fact, when the Liberals were in power in 1989-90 we had 52 hospitals with deficits; the first year of the NDP we had 61 hospitals; and the last year of the NDP we had 68 hospitals with deficits. That is far more than we are seeing today. In fact, there were greater problems for hospitals.

We're working with hospitals. They are getting additional money and we are targeting the money specifically to the programs that are required for patients in this province today. We are specifically addressing the needs and we've —

The Speaker: Can you stop the clock, please.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): In the members' west gallery is Mr Eric Cunningham, the former member for Wentworth North. Welcome.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): This is a question for the Premier, but in his absence I will ask the Chair of Management Board.

Minister, all last week we raised issues with you regarding the Niagara casino, regarding the fact that the same people who advised your government on setting up casinos and then selected the successful bidder at the Niagara casino were also working for the bidders. For over a week we raised these issues.

When we first raised them you said, "Oh, there's nothing wrong here." Then suddenly, yesterday, your tone changed. You said: "The allegation that you make specifically, that was mentioned in the Toronto Star article, I believe, on Saturday, is a new allegation to me. The first time I saw it was on Saturday. A formal process was in place for all parties to declare potential conflicts of interest. I've asked the Ontario Casino Corp and their lawyers to check their records to see if this is true...."

Minister, this wasn't raised on Saturday; this was raised over a week ago. I can show you the press reports that detail it. Why did it take you a week to respond to this conflict-of-interest situation? What were you doing in the week that you didn't respond and you tried to deny it all?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): There's been a lot of innuendo and a lot of mud-raking around this issue.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Hodgson: Before I was interrupted I was just pointing out that the specific innuendo about Coopers and Lybrand and the conflict of interest in the processes that took place is a new allegation that I've asked the Ontario Casino Corp to look into with their lawyers and give a report back. I haven't received that complete report yet, and when I do I'll make that open to the members and we'll take the appropriate action if it turns out to be true. If it's just like other innuendoes and rumours that have been floating around this issue — I must remind the member that he was involved in the 1993 process around Windsor; there were innuendoes and allegations at that time, and we followed a similar process.

Any time you have large contracts with winners and with people who aren't successful, you are subject to this kind of innuendo in an environment around muckraking and other forms. Specifically, to answer your question, I've asked the Ontario Casino Corp to look into it and when they give a complete report we'll find out if it's true or not.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you keep trying to miss the point. This issue was raised by me on May 25. It is now June 2. This issue around Michael French and how he lobbied your government to bring in casinos, how he decided who was going to get the Niagara casino, and how he worked for the people who eventually got the casino, was raised on May 25 and you did nothing about it. My question was, what did you do in the week that you denied it?

It gets deeper than that. The person who is the head of the Ontario Casino Corp, David Nash, is equally a Conservative insider. He's a former Mulroney hack. He's a former fund-raiser for the member for London North. And you're going to ask him, somebody who is also involved in this up to his neck, to now conduct an investigation, after you've denied it for a week? Minister, you haven't taken your responsibility, and now trying to fob this off on to Mr Nash, another Conservative hack, won't work. Where is the independent investigation of the conflict of interest?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The leader of the third party knows full well that the first time this allegation was made specifically with facts alleged in it was on the weekend, with certain companies that were alluded to. I've asked the Ontario Casino Corp with their legal counsel to give me a report back on the facts of this issue. When I receive that completed report, we'll make that public so we're all dealing with the same facts and we'll take the appropriate action if it turns out to be true.

Mr Hampton: What the minister's answer reveals is that until you come here with a lead-pipe case, this minister won't do his public duty and protect the public of Ontario. These allegations were raised here and in the media over a week ago. You tried to ignore it. You tried to cover it up and pretend nothing was happening. We know from media reports, and the media reports are also clear, that two insiders have said the decision to have Michael French run the Niagara process came from the highest levels of the Conservative government.

Minister, I want to know from you, who was it in the highest levels? Was it Leslie Noble? Was it Tom Long? Was it the whiz kids in the Premier's office? Who was it who directed that Michael French would decide who gets the Niagara casino after he lobbied your government to bring in casinos and had worked for the bidders who got the casino? Who decided that?

Hon Mr Hodgson: You've been told time and time again that that is wrong, that it's just muckraking, that it's innuendo of the worst kind. If you're so confident in your facts, make it outside the House where you're held accountable for what you say.

1450

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is directly to the Minister of Community and Social Services, and it's specifically regarding the Ombudsman's report that was released this morning. Of all the criticism that was layered on the government today by the Ombudsman, your ministry was specifically singled out as having a number of problems in it — never such a huge number of backlog cases with the social assistance tribunal that you say was to be more streamlined and efficient, over 6,000 people waiting just to hear an appeal.

The Ombudsman said over and over again today at her press conference that the government is not accountable. I'd like to know what the minister has to say about this today.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): The whole reason we introduced legislation last year, Bill 142, which contains significant provisions to amend the Social Assistance Review Board, was because we knew the processes that board had been operating under, under the two previous governments, were not working. People were waiting far too long and there was far too much red tape. The Ombudsman has certainly highlighted that in her report today. That's one

reason that legislation was passed in this Legislature. Those reforms are taking place this year.

Mrs Pupatello: The Ombudsman reports that this year is the worst she has ever seen it, and your ministry was specifically singled out for its mismanagement, but specifically, the leadership in that ministry chooses to deny a problem even exists. What the Ombudsman said was that the gap between what the government says we're entitled to by way of public service and what the public receives is becoming a gulf, not just a gap. Your response instead is to deny you're having problems there.

The Ombudsman for the first time outlined your government's blatant partisan appointments, the first time an Ombudsman has addressed the issue of patronage. The Ombudsman specifically targeted your ministry for inefficient resources where the public service simply can't do their job for the very people of Ontario your ministry exists to serve: the vulnerable, the disabled.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mrs Pupatello: Instead, under your leadership, you're not accountable and you're just not keeping up. Minister, we'd like to see action —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member across the way would like to see actions today. Where was she last year when we debated Bill 142, which brought —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I repeat, where was she last year when we passed legislation to address the issues that the Ombudsman has pointed out are problems with the old Social Assistance Review Board? The new Social Benefits Tribunal, the new board, with a more streamlined process —

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Ecker: She doesn't want to hear the answer, obviously — that will not take applicants, people on social assistance with appeals, and tie them up in administrative red tape, that legislation for the Social Benefits Tribunal came into effect yesterday.

I don't know where she's been, but the legislation was passed. She had the opportunity to support it. I don't recall her thinking those changes were very important last year. Now she seems to think they are. They came into effect yesterday. We are addressing those concerns that the Ombudsman pointed out, because we agree that there should not be useless red tape and administration, that people should get the answers they need as quickly as possible, and the new Social Benefits Tribunal will do that.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): To the Chair of Management Board again, this whole casino affair reeks of political payola. It reeks of the Patti Starr kind of political influence.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I want to go back to the beginning of the Niagara casino process. Do you remember Domenic Alfieri? Mr Alfieri was the president of the Ontario Casino Corp. He negotiated the interim casino contract with the Navegante Group and we now learn he is working for a company that is financially connected to the Navegante Group. We asked you to disclose that contract for the interim casino and you refused to do that.

Minister, why have you avoided opening up this process to the public? How is it that Mr Alfieri can work at the Ontario Casino Corp, negotiate with the Navegante Group for the interim casino, and then go work for that company? Doesn't that raise the issue of conflict of interest with you? Why won't you open that up and disclose it to the public?

Interjection.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I see that the Liberals say this sounds like the 407.

I do want to point out to you that the past president of the Ontario Casino Corp was an NDP appointment. He's chosen to leave the Ontario Casino Corp as president. Whatever guidelines were in place under your government, I can assure you that we have the same ones, or maybe even stricter.

Mr Hampton: The Chair of Management Board, in order to avoid accountability, wants to refer back to the NDP government and the Windsor casino. Minister, you ought to check the records, because the contract for the Windsor casino was made public, completely public.

I want to ask you, Minister, why don't you employ the same process here with the contract for the Navegante Group and the interim casino at Niagara Falls, and while you're at it, why don't you open up the selection process for the permanent casino at Niagara to public scrutiny as well? Why don't you just do what we did in Windsor when the operator for that casino was selected? Do the same thing: Open it up to the public.

Hon Mr Hodgson: The key word, I guess, that the leader of the third party wants to talk about is when the contract was signed and when it was selected and the end of the process.

As he's fully aware, the negotiations with the highest-ranked proponent are still under way on the Niagara project. I should maybe go back and get the quotes that their government used to do when they were in negotiations on the 407 on why you can't disclose all the details when you're in negotiations.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): My question is to the Minister of Education. In my riding of Quinte, Loyalist College concluded an extremely successful fund-raising initiative, cash and pledges totalling \$3.1 million, including \$800,000 pledged to the Ontario student opportunity

trust fund. With matching dollars from the province, an endowment fund of \$1.6 million will be created.

Minister, my question to you is, how many students could you predict will benefit from this trust fund?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I do thank the member for Quinte for raising this issue. I'm delighted that I was on a campus of Loyalist College in Bancroft just a couple of weeks ago with regard to the opening of a community resource centre, and certainly Loyalist is doing a lot of good work.

This particular fund, the student opportunity trust fund, is one that this government is particularly proud about. The total amount of money is now in excess of \$300 million, and that amount will be matched by the government of Ontario, making over \$600 million to help our students.

To answer the question directly, our reckoning is that this amount of money will help about 185,000 students over the next 10 years.

Mr Rollins: Can the minister share what other initiatives the government has put in place to ensure student accessibility to post-secondary education throughout the province?

Hon David Johnson: There have been a number of other initiatives. Certainly this government has increased the amount of moneys available through the Ontario student assistance program. Since we've taken office, the financial support has gone up by about 33% and there's now over \$300 million a year in direct support. That, I might say, doesn't count the interest forgiveness, which would be about \$105 million. So there is over \$400 million in direct financial support to post-secondary students.

For the first time ever, this government has specified that if the institutions do increase tuition, they must set aside 30% of any increase to assist students. That will amount to about \$86 million just this year in terms of direct assistance to students, plus the access to opportunities fund, with \$150 million over three years. The participation rate in our post-secondary institutions is the highest it's ever been and we want it to go even higher.

1500

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance and it has to do with the property tax situation. The minister will know that a year ago we started with Bill 106. You then introduced a bill to fix Bill 106 called Bill 149. Then there was Bill 164, and now we've got Bill 16.

We were expecting last week that you were going to call the bill to be passed and you decided at the last moment to change that. I gather you actually have a whole bunch of amendments that you're going to propose to the bill tomorrow, although you said last week it didn't need amendments.

The assessment rolls were supposed to go out on Friday and for some reason or another there was a glitch and they didn't go out. We now find that the municipalities are

behind the eight ball. They can't get their final property tax bills out until perhaps two to three months late. As you know, Minister, every month that it is delayed costs the municipalities \$40 million in interest costs.

My question is this: Seeing as it was the government's responsibility for this delay, are you going to reimburse the municipalities the \$40 million a month they have to pay in interest costs?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): The Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario were in, talking to the ministry this morning, as the member may well be aware. We are proposing to deal with several suggestions the association raised last week, as he knows. The offer to meet with them actually has been out there for two to three weeks.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): That's not what they're saying.

Hon Mr Eves: The member for Kingston and The Islands can laugh if he wants. The offer to meet with them, I will repeat, has been out there for over two weeks. However, they came in and talked with Finance officials this morning. We gave them a complete briefing on the bill and we also talked to them about several suggestions they made in their 12-page letter and memo of last week, and we hope to address as many of them as we possibly can in committee tomorrow.

Mr Phillips: Of course you forgot the question, which is the \$40-million question. I hope you'll consider that answer in the supplementary.

Frankly, the municipalities are laughing at the Legislature. I remember it was last Wednesday Mr Leach said you were meeting at 3 o'clock that day. He said, "...we are meeting...at 3 o'clock, I believe."

We returned to our offices and found there was no such thing. There was mass confusion out there symbolized by — actually the clerks and treasurers perhaps summarized it best. They said: "Surely this illustrates better than anything that this government, in its haste, is making legislation by the seat of its pants without proper thought or planning. Yesterday's bill is amended by today's, which will likely be amended by tomorrow's."

The issue is, this was supposed to simplify property taxes and it has got far more complicated. But I return to the question I asked first. It is going to cost our municipalities, our property taxpayers, the hardworking people of Ontario, \$40 million a month in lost interest payments. Will you reimburse those municipalities for that \$40-million cost?

Hon Mr Eves: We are indeed talking to municipalities about any cash flow problems they may have in addressing exactly the concerns the member has raised. But I want to point out a couple of measures we have already taken. First of all, we've deferred any realignment responsibilities of municipalities. They have not had to pay for any of them. That totals a deferment of \$590 million to date province-wide.

Despite the fact we are not asking municipalities to come up with this money, we have advanced the community reinvestment fund to them in the amount of \$335

million, so they are \$590 million plus \$335 million ahead. I think that will more than cover your \$40 million a month. Despite that, we will still address the very problem the member for Scarborough-Agincourt raises.

You've now got the answer, of almost \$1 billion of adjustments that we've already made this year to date for municipalities, and we will make sure that municipalities do not lose money in this process.

ABORTION

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, you stood in this House yesterday and said that doctors who performed abortions at Wellesley Hospital have now got privileges to do those procedures at other Toronto hospitals. You said: "All of the physicians who performed the abortion procedures had their privileges transferred to another hospital. That has taken place and is in the course of taking place."

Would you tell us what processes you've put in place to facilitate this? You see, no one we've talked to knows anything about this. Rather than question your honesty, I ask you this: How many doctors from Wellesley Hospital have now got privileges at other hospitals to perform abortions, and at which hospitals do they now practise?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): When hospitals go through the process of restructuring, obviously there are decisions that are made within communities. Hospitals have joint executive committees that are struck in order to facilitate the transfer of services and to transfer also the physicians. Physicians then have the opportunity to get privileges elsewhere. As we go through the process of restructuring, as you well know, there are going to be some services that some hospitals deliver and others will deliver other services.

Mrs Boyd: It's pretty important for you to answer these questions, because the Premier this morning said in a scum, "The key for the Minister of Health is to ensure that services are available to the public, if not in one institution, then another." He went on to say, "The reality and the practical application of the Canada Health Act is that those services are available and people know where they are."

The transfer of services has resulted because of the closure of Wellesley Central. The commission ordered that those services and budget be transferred from Wellesley Central to Toronto East General, and the services at Doctors Hospital were to go to the Toronto Hospital. Minister, has this happened? Can you guarantee that this means the 1,300 or more abortions that were performed last year at the Wellesley will be performed in the next year at the Toronto East General and that 1,700 additional procedures have been funded at the Toronto Hospital?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again, I would just indicate that as we go through the process of restructuring, the hospitals involved in the restructuring process set up committees in order to facilitate the transfer of services from one to the

other. In this case, it was a transfer between Wellesley and St Michael's Hospital and also a transfer between St Michael's Hospital and some of the services to other hospitals in the city of Toronto.

Not all hospitals in this province deliver the same types of services. However, these services are available to people throughout the province. These services that are no longer going to be available at Wellesley Hospital, if they're not available at St Michael's Hospital, will be available at other hospitals within the city of Toronto.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): My question is for the Minister of Labour. On Friday, the minister joined me and my fellow colleague the member for Lambton, Mr Beaubien, in Sarnia to celebrate the construction of a new product development plant for the next generation of plastics at Dow Chemical. This is Dow's first new plant in Sarnia in almost a quarter of a century. I am pleased to say this project will create over 400 construction jobs for three years, and 50 permanent, highly skilled, good-paying jobs in Sarnia once the facility is complete.

This is great news for Sarnia, but this should only be the beginning. There are obstacles that are keeping Sarnia from reaching its full potential in attracting thousands of quality jobs. The number one obstacle is Ontario's construction competitiveness. The petrochemical industry can build their plants anywhere in the world. What is the Minister of Labour doing to improve construction competitiveness and encourage the petrochemical industry to build their plants here in Ontario?

1510

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I am committed to creating job opportunities by making Ontario more attractive for investors and I was delighted to join the member for Sarnia, and also the member for Lambton, in Sarnia last Friday to celebrate the construction of a new product development plant for the next generation of plastics at Dow Chemical and the next generation of jobs. This announcement is great news for Sarnia and the surrounding area of Lambton.

Construction competitiveness is an obstacle to attracting new investment in jobs. Ontario is losing millions of dollars in investment and all the jobs that go with that investment because some of our labour laws, particularly in the construction industry, are not working for Ontarians. If we can build a framework that will bring contractors and building trade unions together, they will be able to bid competitively for multimillion-dollar global investment and create thousands of jobs in Ontario.

Mr Boushy: I appreciate the minister's commitment to Sarnia and the Lambton jobs for the entire province. The minister's commitment to ensure Ontario is competitive in our construction costs for projects that could bring hundreds of millions of dollars in new investment in Sarnia and Ontario not only tells the world that Ontario is open for business but will bring investors through the

doors, creating thousands of jobs for Sarnia and this province. Minister, to date, what steps have been taken towards improving the construction competitiveness in Ontario?

Hon Mr Flaherty: My staff and I and my ministry have met with the building trade unions, with trade union leaders in carpentry, sheet metal and all the other trades, general contractors, subcontractors, local construction associations and provincial construction associations, all in an effort to come up with an industry solution, a solution that everyone at the table knows is essential to bid competitively for investments worth hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of jobs.

As late as last week the parties were meeting, and I encourage them to continue to make every effort to negotiate a solution. The negotiations have met with some success, but to date a solution has eluded them. For this reason, the government is considering options that will directly address the competitiveness issue while ensuring a productive and stable labour relations environment. New investment in jobs for Ontario is a priority for this government. I am committed to making Ontario more attractive to investors to continue the creation of job opportunities in communities like Sarnia and Lambton county around Ontario.

LANDS FOR LIFE

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources. In your very short time in this place, you've been able to create a second crisis in your career, this time a crisis with Lands for Life. You've started a war among Ontarians over crown land management with this process. Your let's-divide-up-the-pie approach to management is pitting north against south; it's pitting the forestry and mining industry against tourism and conservationists in this province. It should be obvious to you that the potential breakup of your Boreal West Round Table that is falling apart is proof to you that this process has failed.

Minister, why not a more holistic approach and manage our resources from their prospective values? We can protect, we can even enhance, biodiversity in Ontario if you were to allow some of the new ideas that are being discussed across this country to be considered here in Ontario. Admit today the Lands for Life is not working and that the answer lies in taking a more modern approach to resource management.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): Lands for Life, as the member may or may not know, is a process that has been going on for some time in Ontario. It really is an attempt to involve the public in a conversation about the planning of public land use. This process involves three round tables of people who are committed to the future of Ontario, committed to making sure that we use those natural resources wisely and who have been engaged in a public consultation that has taken literally hundreds and hundreds of meetings with

people right across the province to ask them what they believe we should do for the future of the province.

I think it's the right process. It has certainly engaged a lot of very interesting conversation with people who are committed to that future. I welcome it as a public process for public input, to make sure that the public has a say in the use of public lands.

Mr Ramsay: The minister thinks it's the right approach, but the Timiskaming Municipal Association in my riding is discussing the idea of a separate northern Ontario province, an idea that personally I don't like, but that's the type of powder keg you have ignited in northern Ontario with this process. By the way, the last time this idea was discussed, it was your party that was in power here in this province.

You have proceeded with this idea of reducing resource-based economic activity without producing any sort of economic impact statement to tell northerners how their economy and their communities will be affected. You have frozen further prospecting and developing on mining claims without any discussion of compensation. Minister, that is theft. Any sort of confiscation without compensation is theft, not only from those who put their work and money into developing those claims but to all of us because it steals from potential development in our northern communities.

Minister, this is the wrong approach. It is not working. When are you going to take a different approach and tell northern Ontarians they have an important part to play in this province?

Hon Mr Snobelen: If the member opposite is accusing this government of having northerners, the people who, by the way, comprised the membership in the round tables, be engaged in a public conversation, particularly in the north, about the use of the resources in the future, the resources that people, particularly in the north of Ontario, have relied on for many generations, if he's accusing us of having a public conversation about the use of public lands, then he's right, that's exactly what we're doing, asking the public what they want to see on public lands in the future.

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I also have a question to the Minister of Natural Resources. In February, Ontario's Divisional Court ruled that your Conservative government had broken the law by allowing commercial logging in Temagami, Out Lake and Upper Spanish forests. The court found that you had violated the requirements of the Crown Forest Sustainability Act and breached seven conditions of the class EA on timber management, and the court ordered you, in one year's time, to comply with the act, the EA requirements and the Forest Management Planning Manual.

The Conservative government appealed this decision and argued in court that you couldn't comply because you've cut your staff and forestry expenditures by 55%. Last week, the court ruled against you again. They told you to comply within the prescribed time, and I understand

that you intend to appeal this decision now to the Court of Appeal on June 18. My question is this: Why do you think you're above the law? Why don't you do what the court has ordered you to do?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): As the member opposite has indicated in the question, this matter is still before the courts. In respect for those courts, I don't believe I can comment on the matter.

Ms Martel: That's not good enough because this court case makes it abundantly clear that your Conservative government has put Ontario's natural resources at risk because of your deep cuts to the Ministry of Natural Resources. You had your legal staff argue in court that you couldn't comply with the law to protect forestry resources because of the deep cuts you've made to ministry staff. Your government has made the decision to lay off 2,000 staff. That's a decision you have to assume some responsibility for.

Now we see in the estimates for this year that you intend to cut another \$41 million from the operating budget at MNR and that will surely mean more staff layoffs. It's irresponsible for you to argue you can't meet the law because you don't have the staff. Why are you and your government putting the natural resources of this province at risk?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I want to assure the member opposite that we have done nothing that would put the natural resources at risk in Ontario. As the member opposite discussed in the last set of questions, we in fact are undertaking a very ambitious public consultation about the use, the preservation and the conservation of those natural resources, so that is the track record. I can assure the member opposite that with respect to the courts — and this matter is before the courts as she discussed, it is before the courts now — I can't comment on that until they make a judgement.

1520

AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. We know that Ontario's agrifood sector is getting stronger and a strong agrifood sector builds prosperous communities. By way of example, the strength of both the tobacco and the ginseng export markets strengthens communities like Tillsonburg, Delhi and Simcoe in my riding.

I'm sure the opposition would be pleased to hear that Ontario is one of the most popular locations for attracting investment in the agrifood industry. Minister, will you share this good news with the House?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): To my colleague from Norfolk, yes, Ontario is number one in the food processing industry in Canada and we're pleased to say that some 50% of the food processing and manufacturing is done right here in Ontario.

In 1996, Ontario attracted some \$580 million in new investment in the agrifood processing industry alone, and that's more than Ohio, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Georgia, Tennessee, and we're nipping at the heels of states like Wisconsin and Texas. Clearly the policies of the Harris government are not only attracting new investment but keeping present investment and acting as a magnet to the agrifood processing industry here in Ontario.

Mr Barrett: From that answer, I think we all realize why Ontario is such a great place to live, work and raise a family.

Minister, in my riding there's an excellent working relationship between the Ginseng Growers Association of Canada, the Ontario Ginseng Cooperative and the Ontario government. One goal is to expand the export of high-quality Ontario ginseng to Asian markets. Can you inform the House about some of the recent successes in Ontario's agrifood industry, including an agreement which will have a positive effect in my riding?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: The honourable member mentioned ginseng. Ginseng has made major inroads here in Ontario, particularly into the Chinese market. I read a headline here that \$9 million of Ontario ginseng will be sold to China in a deal inked during the trade mission in March and April, led by Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs officials. The ginseng industry is an outstanding example of how versatile Ontario's agrifood sector is.

"Cambridge Pig Firm Shows How to Compete" — a headline on an editorial in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record of May 8. More money again being invested: "Chatham Ethanol Plant Seeing Double," London Free Press, April 17; Ontario's "Wheat Industry Poised to Grow Over Next Five Years," Chatham Daily News; "Frozen Food Company" — I could go on for the rest of the afternoon. However, I think the point is made. Ontario is a magnet for the agrifood processing industry.

PETITIONS

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion, three-year agreement with the Ontario Medical Association; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to improve patient access to chiropractic services on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I'm presenting a petition that I've been asked to present today on behalf of Mr Bill Whatcott, who is a resident in Beaches-Woodbine and who is here today to hear his petition being read.

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

As I have informed Mr Whatcott, while I am not in agreement with the content, I'm very pleased to present it on his behalf.

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards;

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and other devices contrary to their moral and religious beliefs;

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences;

"Whereas physicians in Ontario are often pressured to give referrals for medication, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral;

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their conscience; and

"Whereas health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their conscience and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

This petition is signed by hundreds of people from my riding and across Ontario.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): My petition joins thousands of others on the topic of the restructuring advisory group in Ottawa-Carleton.

"Whereas the Ottawa-Carleton Restructuring Advisory Group has prepared a preliminary report for the Ottawa-Carleton Development Services Restructuring Project; and

"Whereas the consultation process was selective and limited; and

"Whereas those who require services are being pitted against those who have services; and

"Whereas service to one group should not be at the expense of another, regardless of age or language; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services' corporate agenda is one of wholesale destruction of the support system for the vulnerable; and

"Whereas this corporate agenda will threaten the health, safety and likely the lives of many disabled people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to stop this destructive restructuring project and provide adequate funding for quality services for the developmentally disabled."

I affix my name to it.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I'd like to present three petitions today which are the same as the petitions that were read by the member for Beaches-Woodbine and the member for Mississauga East. They were prepared by St Boniface Catholic Women's League in Zurich and The Life Centre in Goderich. They were dropped off to my office in Wingham by Linda Burns and again deal with conscience of health care workers.

1530

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a new petition which has arrived at my office and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Conservative government of Mike Harris is trying to increase the limit on the amount of money that corporations and individuals are allowed to contribute to political parties and individual candidates in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Harris government plans to introduce legislation to permit political parties and candidates to spend far more money during election campaigns; and

"Whereas the Conservative government of Mike Harris would like to remove certain campaign expenditures such as polling and campaign headquarters equipment from the spending limits placed on political parties and candidates; and

"Whereas the Conservative government is proposing to abolish the Ontario election finances commission, the watchdog agency policing political contributions and expenditures; and

"Whereas the Harris government wishes to shorten the length of provincial election campaigns and to permit expensive media advertising throughout the entire campaign period, thereby favouring the political parties and candidates with the most money; and

"Whereas the changes to the Election Finances Act proposed by Mike Harris will give undue and unacceptable influence to the wealthiest and most powerful interests in our province and will result in the problems that have plagued the American political system, where money plays a central role;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the Harris government abandon its attempt to place more emphasis on money in the election campaigns of Ontario."

I affix my signature, as I'm in full agreement.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): I have a petition which I've been asked to read in its entirety.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards;

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs;

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences;

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral;

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas the health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): As you know, the government is imposing closure once again this afternoon, for the 56th time —

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Read your petition, please.

Mr Gerretsen: — so this petition is very much in order. It states as follows, Madam Speaker:

"Whereas the people of Ontario want rigorous discussion on legislation dealing with public policy issues like health care, education and care for seniors; and

"Whereas many people in Ontario believe that the Mike Harris government is moving too quickly and recklessly, creating havoc with the provision of quality health care and quality education; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has passed new legislative rules which have eroded the ability of both the public and the media to closely scrutinize the actions of the Ontario government; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, when they were in opposition, defended the rights of the opposition and used the rules to their full advantage when they believed it was necessary to slow down the passage of controversial legislation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has now reduced the amount of time that MPPs will have to debate the important issues of the day; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government, through its rule changes, has diminished the role of elected members of the Legislative Assembly who are accountable to the people of Ontario who elect them, and instead has chosen to

concentrate power in the Premier's office in the hands of people who are not elected officials;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Mike Harris to withdraw his draconian rule changes and restore rules which promote rigorous debate on contentious issues and hold the government accountable to the people of Ontario."

I am in full agreement with this petition and have signed accordingly.

REZONING

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I have a petition of 159 signatures from the town of Caledon in my riding. It's addressed to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the town of Caledon.

"We, the undersigned, object to the rezoning of the Rockford property, Old Base Line and Winston Churchill Boulevard, in order that it be turned into a quarry for the purpose of mining the rock that is contained therein."

I have signed this petition.

ABORTION

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I have a petition here that comes from the towns of LaSalle, Essex, Maidstone, throughout both my riding and the riding of Essex South. It's a petition regarding the public financing of abortions and I'm happy to submit that to the table.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas abortion is a lifestyle choice which is never medically necessary; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's injunction against 18 pro-life citizens initiated by the NDP in 1993 is an unwarranted suppression of free speech and of peaceful and lawful activity; and

"Whereas health care workers are experiencing coercion to participate in procedures contrary to their consciences and unfair discrimination for acting according to their consciences;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That public funding of abortion should cease, that the injunction against pro-life witnessing should be dropped and that the conscience rights of health care workers be given new, explicit protection in the law."

I agree with this petition, and I sign my name forthwith.

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): I have a petition signed by 546 from my riding:

"Whereas medical procedures have been cut to the bone for lack of funds; and

"Whereas our emergency rooms are strapped for funds to provide emergency service that is often less than adequate;

"We, the undersigned, are opposed to the use of public funds to provide needless abortions to a selected group at the expense of procedures that all Ontarians are entitled to.

"We trust that you will give this matter your consideration."

I will add my signature to the petition.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further petitions? I apologize for missing the rotation. The member for Kingston and The Islands.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition here that deals with some matters that were raised in the House today and yesterday. It states as follows:

"Whereas the Conservative government of Mike Harris is trying to increase the limit on the amount of money that corporations and individuals are allowed to contribute to the political parties and individual candidates in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Harris government plans to introduce legislation to permit political parties and candidates to spend far more money during election campaigns than was the case in the past; and

"Whereas the Conservative government of Mike Harris would like to remove certain campaign expenditures, such as polling and campaign headquarters equipment, from the spending limits placed on political parties and candidates; and

"Whereas the Conservative government is proposing to abolish the Ontario election finance commission, the watchdog agency policing political contributions and expenditures; and

"Whereas the Harris government wishes to shorten the length of provincial election campaigns and to permit expensive media advertising throughout the entire campaign period, and thereby favouring the political parties and the candidates with the most money; and

"Whereas the changes to the Election Finances Act proposed by Mike Harris will give undue and unacceptable influence to the wealthiest and most powerful interests in our province and will result in the problems that have plagued the American political system, where money plays a central role;

"We, therefore, ask the Harris government to immediately cease and desist from making these rules and implementing them into legislation."

I've signed the petition as well.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent that to assist Mel Lastman we have an emergency debate on the future of the Spice Girls. I think that's an important issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Agreed? I heard a no.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I don't know if we can get the government to agree to this, they may not, but I would ask unanimous consent for the House not to sit tonight so that everybody can attend the gala press gallery event.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed? I hear a no.

Orders of the day. Government House leader.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I'm Mr Grinch. I'd like to indicate that I said no to that unanimous consent on the Spice Girls.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move government notice of motion number 13.

I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 15, An Act to cut taxes for people and for small business and to implement other measures contained in the 1998 Budget, when Bill 15 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill, without further debate or amendment; and at such time, the bill shall be referred to the standing committee on administration of justice;

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That the standing committee on administration of justice shall be authorized to meet to consider the bill at its regularly scheduled meeting times on June 8 and June 9, 1998.

That, pursuant to standing order 74(d), the Chair of the standing committee on administration of justice shall establish the deadline for the tabling of amendments or for filing them with the clerk of the standing committee;

That the committee shall be authorized to meet for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill on Thursday, June 11, 1998, from 9 am to 12 noon, and following routine proceedings until completion of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill;

That, at 4:30 pm on that day, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto;

That any divisions required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a);

That the committee shall report the bill to the House on Monday, June 15, 1998. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the date provided, the bill shall be deemed to have been passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House;

That upon receiving the report of the standing committee on administration of justice, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That one sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At 5:55 pm or 9:25 pm, as the case may be, on such day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That the vote on third reading of the bill may, at the request of any chief whip of a recognized party in the House, be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding "deferred votes"; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceeding on the bill, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes.

I want to indicate that I will be sharing my time with the member for Nepean, the member for Durham East and the member for Dufferin-Peel.

Before those members should stand and speak on this motion, it had been our desire that it would not be necessary to go to a time allocation motion. In that case, if we had been able to finish second reading debate and refer it to a committee at an earlier date, we would have had greater time for that committee to meet and consider the bill and report the bill back here.

Unfortunately, Bill 15 deals with many of the matters related or involved with the budget that our finance minister presented early in May, and it's necessary for this bill to pass into law before we rise for our summer recess.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): You should have called it earlier, then.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Order, please. Come to order.

Hon Mr Sterling: I guess the intransigence of the opposition to push this government to time allocation on each and every piece of legislation —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Oh, come off it.

Hon Mr Sterling: Not each and every. I give them the fact that they have given us a few pieces of legislation without having to do that, but very few. In this case, it would have been our hope to get this bill out earlier so that more people could have been involved with having some kind of public hearings.

It's unfortunate that we have to move a time allocation motion on this but that seems to be the way this House is operating at this particular juncture of our parliamentary history and that's the way we have to carry on our business.

At this point in time I would like to turn it over to the member for Nepean, who is a parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Finance and has been doing an excellent job with regard to carrying legislation on his behalf in this House.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to rise in debate. I want to say at the outset of my remarks how disappointed I am that we didn't accede to the demand of the member for Windsor-Riverside. I would have enjoyed the opportunity to back up the mayor of the city of Toronto in his efforts to reunite the Spice Girls.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to a motion to have this bill, which will cut taxes and create

jobs, go forward to committee so the Legislature can consider the bill, with the hope of passing it so we can indeed continue to reduce taxes.

Bill 15 is the first budget bill arising from the 1998 provincial budget. It proposes two principal income tax reductions. Basically it's designed to see the complete 30.2% income tax cut take effect by July 1, 1998. It does it in two phases with respect to allowing it to be fully implemented for the 1999 tax year. The basic personal income tax rate would go from 45% of the federal rate to 42.75% effective July 1 of this year for 1998, and then when it's a full 12-month calendar year, in 1999, it would be 40.5%. That's quite remarkable because what we've seen is income taxes in Ontario go from a high of 58% of every federal tax dollar to 40.5%.

There is a clear and inextricable link between the provincial income tax rate and the economic growth rate. If you look at the two powerhouses of job creation and economic growth in Canada this year, you'll see that Alberta and Ontario are the two with the lowest personal income tax rate, so cutting taxes certainly works.

I don't like to simply look at Conservative economists or Conservative members to describe what is a good bill, so I tried to find some other thoughts —

Interjection.

Mr Baird: "Even from the federal government," the member for Northumberland says.

I found a very interesting quote: "They," the taxpayers, "have more money in their pockets, and therefore they have more money to spend. Tax cuts increase domestic consumption." I wonder who said that? It was the Honourable John Manley, the federal Liberal Minister of Industry, the wisest thing I've ever heard John Manley say. John Manley believes that tax cuts help boost consumer confidence, and that creates jobs. I agree with John Manley on this particular issue.

We look as well at the chief economist for CIBC Wood Gundy, Jeff Rubin. He says, "In today's economy, tax cuts make a lot of sense." Indeed, that's extremely good news, that we're seeing some strong indications. When John Manley, the federal Liberal Minister of Industry, from my home region of eastern Ontario, Ottawa-Carleton, says it boosts consumer confidence, we see that in Ottawa-Carleton, because John Manley obviously knows what he's talking about on this one issue.

I have an article from the Ottawa Citizen dated just yesterday: "Indicators Point to Expanding Economy: More jobs, rising retail sales in Ottawa generate optimism, consumer confidence."

"Rising employment and a solid performance in key business indicators continue to show the Ottawa-area economy in a strong expansion mode, a review of the latest economic indicators show...."

"Sales at department stores in the first four months of the year totalled nearly \$199 million, up 14% from the same period last year, Statistics Canada reported." That was indeed good news.

It goes on, "Growth in actual jobs, as opposed to hiring plans, is one of the most positive features of the latest

economic review. The Ottawa...region added 4,300 jobs in April, the biggest gain in 20 months."

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): That's 4,300.

Mr Baird: Yes, 4,300, as the member for Etobicoke says. "The unemployment rate fell to 7.1%, its lowest level in seven years." Ottawa-Carleton has gone through a very difficult time with the downsizing of almost 20,000 federal public service jobs in Ottawa, unemployment rose to 10.8% not long ago. We're seeing some solid boost in consumer confidence, aided and assisted by the provincial income tax reduction. That is indeed good news.

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In Ontario everyone gets a tax cut, but the percentage of a tax cut is far greater for those with low and moderate incomes. There are in fact people with lower incomes who, while they have to pay federal income tax, don't have to pay any provincial income tax. That is indeed good news, because the tax cut disproportionately helps low- and middle-income families, who have been hit the hardest by the tax bites in recent years.

Economic studies have almost universally found substantial short-run and long-run benefits from tax cuts, and Bill 15 will allow those tax reductions to be implemented and allow us to unleash the benefits of job creation and boost consumer confidence, and that is indeed very, very good news.

I look over at my colleagues in the opposition. The NDP has taken a very principled stand on tax reduction. They've been honest and up front. They've said they don't agree with it and, if elected, they're going to reverse major parts of that. But the Liberal Party is planning on keeping the tax reduction. Do you know why they want to keep the tax reduction? Because they promised to cut taxes by billions of dollars in the last election.

Someone said, "John, don't hold the red book up again," so I won't. Instead I have a press release dated Thursday, February 16, 1995, with a big Liberal red trillium on the top. "Windsor — Ontario Liberal leader Lyn McLeod said tonight a Liberal government in Ontario would cut taxes and balance the operating budget in its first term in office."

I'll give you a quote from the then Liberal leader: "It's time that government started following a policy for zero tolerance for tax increases. A Liberal government will reduce overall taxes by 5%, easing the tax burden without driving the deficit sky-high."

The 5% tax reduction was five points, from 58 to 53 on the federal income tax, a tax cut that would go well into the billions long before the balanced budget came forward.

I know the member for St Catharines was a big supporter of Lyn McLeod and her red book in the last election, and this policy was a major part of the Liberal election strategy because they recognized that cutting taxes was beneficial to job creation. But that was then and this is now. They were supporting billion-dollar tax cuts before the election. Then they're voting against tax cuts after the election. But after the next election if they were

given the opportunity they say they would keep the tax cuts. Two out of three suggest they probably agree with tax reductions.

There's another important part of this bill. Part V of Bill 15 deals with borrowing authority, because we've got to borrow the money to pay off the Liberal and NDP debts in this province. Speaking of debt, I look across and I see my colleague the member for Ottawa West, and I see the —

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please, member for Ottawa West.

Mr Baird: The member for Ottawa West was a city councillor in the city of Ottawa, and the city of Ottawa has two cornerstones of their policies. They have tax and spend. Those are the big policies. They also have an underlying authority: borrow.

Before I go into specific details, I want to give some credit where credit is due. The current mayor, Jim Watson, and his deputy worship, the deputy mayor of Ottawa, Allan Higdon, are finally beginning to turn things around and clean up the mess left to them by successive regimes, most notably with the participation of my colleague the member for Ottawa West.

There was an interesting report released not too long ago: The Canadian Bond Rating Service Ontario Municipal Debt and Reserves Analysis. They looked at 71 municipalities, and Ottawa ranked highest on debt per capita of the 71 municipalities reviewed —

Interjection.

Mr Baird: Yes, that's the legacy of the member for Ottawa West, and the belief —

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Just to be helpful, I wonder if the member has forgotten about part V of the bill, which increases the debt of this province.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr Baird: Ottawa ranked highest on debt per capita: \$934 —

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Nepean, take your seat a moment. Member for Ottawa West, would you come to order, please.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I will try to be very —

The Deputy Speaker: No arguments. Come to order.

Mr Baird: I've got some other better articles I could get out and read, but I won't. Ottawa ranks highest on debt per capita of the 71 municipalities reviewed, and now there are two strategies: (1) You cut spending and reduce your debt; (2) You raid Nepean taxpayers. People in Nepean aren't particularly keen about that idea, I'll tell you, because in Nepean this year we're cutting taxes by 2%. It's a big debate on Nepean council: Should they cut taxes by 1%, by 2%, by 5%? It's because in Nepean we're taxfighters; in Nepean we're debt-free.

There was an excellent lobby, and I want to give credit to Councillor Jan Harder in the city of Nepean, who fought very hard to increase a very small tax cut to get a bigger tax cut for working families in Nepean. Jan Harder worked extremely hard on that. She also had the active support of Councillor Wayne Phillips and Councillor Rick Chiarelli. They were trying to help cut taxes and maintain a debt-free status for Nepean. That is indeed good news for hardworking taxpayers in my community.

That's exactly similar to what Bill 15 is trying to do; it's trying to ensure that we follow a balanced budget plan, that we can balance the budget in the time line we committed to or perhaps even earlier. It ensures that we can cut taxes and get the heavy weight of government off the backs of hardworking families in Ontario, and that's indeed good news. It also helps create jobs, the overwhelming, number one priority of this government.

I suppose we could have waited to cut taxes. We could have said to the unemployed: "Step aside. You'll have to wait until after the budget is balanced." But we didn't say no to the unemployed. We didn't say, "Step aside." We said, "Unemployment is the number one problem facing the province of Ontario, and we want to grow the economy and help the economy create jobs," and that is good news indeed.

One final part of Bill 15 in this motion we're dealing with that I would like to speak to is with respect to the provisions on the land transfer tax. In successive budgets in recent years, they have given a rebate of the land transfer tax to first-time home buyers. The desire there is to help young people primarily, to give young families the ability to purchase their own home, because home ownership is a fundamental, core value for working families in Ontario, and that is a dream the Ontario government wants to support.

Provisions in Bill 15 would extend the land transfer tax refund an extra year, into 1999, and that will be a substantial help to residents in eastern Ontario and in Ottawa-Carleton. It will help them buy homes. It will also help the growth of the home building industry in my part of the province. In Davidson Heights in Nepean, in Longfields and in Barrhaven, we're seeing significant economic growth.

We had one column, "Tech Boom Triggers New Development." The local economy in Nepean is seeing a "365% jump in the total value of building permits issued during the first quarter." That is indeed good news. That's probably assisted by the 5,000 new jobs coming to Nepean at Nortel, because these folks are going to need homes in which to live. So the high-tech jobs are growing the rest of the economy as well, which is very important.

But it's going to be felt around the region, not only in Orleans in the east end, but also in Stittsville and the township of Goulbourn, the home builders there. I think 200 new homes are being built in Stittsville this year, and that's indeed good news. This budget bill, Bill 15, is designed to assist that. That is extremely important for that important industry, because that industry creates jobs.

We've seen some good results, but we've got to continue to work hard to grow the economy, to assist the economy to grow, to take away the barriers to growth. Just recently the Ottawa Citizen looked at the new jobs in the region. The high-debt, high-tax municipality over a five-year period, Ottawa, saw a reduction of 2,400 jobs. But the pro-growth, pro-economic development municipalities, like the city of Nepean, saw 9,191 new jobs in that five-year period; and Kanata, led by Mayor Merle Nicholds, saw an increase of 7,375 jobs, which was indeed good news. Other municipalities such as Gloucester and Goulbourn also saw increases in the number of jobs, and that was indeed good news.

1600

But we've got to continue to work hard to continue to create an economy that will help create jobs in the private sector so that more people can have the opportunity to secure full-time employment.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Scarborough-Agincourt has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Natural Resources concerning Ipperwash. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm. Further debate.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure today to stand and participate in the — I believe we're at a time allocation motion on Bill 15. For those persons watching today, I think it's important to understand that we'll try to keep this not only on the time allocation motion but on the importance of Bill 15, which is An Act to cut taxes for people and for small business and to implement other measures contained in the 1998 Budget, announced by the Minister of Finance on May 5.

When preparing to make some remarks today, I would be remiss not to re-examine the budget, and just looking at this as a document, all Ontarians, regardless of their party necessity to criticize, have got to recognize that the economy's up and jobs are up. Quite honestly, if you want to bring about a position —

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: We are dealing with a specific motion in which the government House leader wants to limit debate on Bill 15 by imposing closure on any further debate. I believe that the member is not addressing the closure motion, as to why the government feels it's necessary to invoke closure in this case.

The Deputy Speaker: Take your seat, please. I believe that the debate and the content of the debate are in order on this particular motion.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As the member for Nepean pointed out on several points for the member for Kingston and The Islands, the Liberals, although they didn't have any well-defined positions, did articulate, and I could read from this now infamous book: "The Ontario Liberal plan continues through a full term of government. Everything in this action plan can be achieved while reaching our goal of balancing the budget" — we're doing that; we're committed to doing that — "without raising taxes." I'm not certain they would have followed through. "In fact, we will reduce taxes by 5%."

It's their plans that we are executing, and I'm going back to the original point I was trying to establish.

With respect to the bill itself and the motion to debate it, this particular bill goes through about eight sections which I'll outline here shortly.

It's important for all members to see the background. I like some of the background documents. You can read these in your local news magazines. They're not political. They're real statements about our economy: "Private sector forecasters expect Ontario's economy to grow faster than any G7 industrial nation over the next three years." What could be a better testimony that the plan is working? It's the confidence in the economy. When I look at the confidence, the expansion was at 4.8% in 1997 and the forecast by the Conference Board of Canada is in excess of 4%. Ontario exceeded most of those targets.

But one has to examine the fundamentals in the budget. In my riding of Durham East, it's clear, when you look around, primarily it's an important growth area. The housing starts represent a 25% increase in that particular sector alone. Ontario industrial and international exports are up by 8.3%. Once again, all the factors and all the underlying fundamentals are in place.

How can I tell the difference? Look at job creation in the last year alone. Over 200,000 net new jobs in the last year alone. I can tell you that it seems to be working in my riding. People say to me, "The first thing you promised was a tax cut." I think one of the fundamentals of the overall implementation of Bill 15 is to deliver it. On July 1, 1998, every working-income Ontarian will experience a tax cut. The most important part is that 64% of the tax-paying public — that's the people between \$25,000 and \$70,000, that middle group — the modest income people, will receive the largest reduction. In fact, all of the lower-income groups will receive 30% or more.

The important thing to recognize here is, how does this translate to families? A family of four in my riding of Durham East: For example, let's say the net income for a family of four with two working parents was \$60,000. What does it mean to them? On a year-over-year basis, that means \$1,210. That's over \$100 month more of disposable income than they had before we were elected. Over the period, the cumulative affect is over \$3,500. That becomes a much more stable amount of money that's actually going back into the economy.

How am I confident this money isn't going somewhere else? I put to you that all money, through the 30% tax cut that will be fully implemented by July 1, will result in, what? If people save the money, that means there's money in the banks for banks to loan. If they spend the money, people have to make those products. If they invest in a mutual fund, it drives up the amount of access to capital. They may even choose to pay off debt, which will give them more disposable income in the future. It could be argued that whatever they do with the money creates jobs; there's no question about it. In my view, it's important because those are the constituents I represent in my riding of Durham East.

There are other factors, but personally, with five children — and I have three children in university; two

completed university — education and investing in the future is absolutely critical. There's no one here in this House, on either side, who would disagree that we must prepare our young people for the opportunities in the future. There is a very comprehensive plan put forward, not only by Minister Eves but also Minister Johnson, the Minister of Education and Training.

I like this starting point. In 1997 we started with the \$500-million R&D fund, working in partnership with the private sector. That fund has been brought forward; I'm pleased. In the budget the minister announced that Laurentian University, the Samuel Lunenfeld Research Institute, the University of Waterloo and the University of Toronto, together with private sector partners, are already investing in research and development. I think the minister also went on to thank the Canada Foundation for Innovation, Dr Peter George from McMaster University and Dr William Leggett from Queen's University. There they are, independent of government, at arm's length of government, allocating the funds for research and investment in the future.

But that's only part of the story. Post-secondary reform is long overdue, ever since Dr Smith's report on post-secondary education reform indicated that there had to be change, not only in the tuition aspect but in the overall accessibility to post-secondary. I'm going to look through here and find and share with the members here today three important initiatives this government brought forward as part of the last budget in May.

The most important one is \$29 million of new dollars being set aside for the universities to acknowledge the growth factor. That's absolutely critical to allow the universities to deliver high quality, accountable education systems. Mind you, through all of this debate, you've got to recognize that in the whole decision we are seeing in the papers about tuition fees, the actual schedule of fees, the province permits in a guideline what the fees can be, but the boards of directors make those ultimate decisions, whether it's a 4% increase or a 10% increase. Those are tough decisions.

But it shouldn't be an access problem. Our minister and our Premier have said clearly that excellence should never be denied admission, so we've set aside some important scholarship funds: \$1.2 billion in scholarships at Ontario colleges and universities.

The most important thing to recognize is where the jobs are. Two out of three jobs created in the last 10 years are in the knowledge-based industry; two out of every three jobs are knowledge-based jobs. What has this government done? We've set aside \$150 million to double the number of spaces in engineering faculties, at computer science faculties at college and university level. There was an announcement just this week of rolling that plan further out. How much per student for creating a spot? That's a supplement to the already — I think it's in excess of \$6,000 per student that the government provides in terms of funding for our students to continue their post-secondary education.

I look through this document, and it's a document every Ontarian should read. It was delivered here on May 5. If

they want one, please call my constituency office. The overarching theme here is that every promise we've made is a promise kept. It's refreshing and reassuring for all members of the House to have a look at the document and keep track. In fact there's a very interesting document that we have. I think this document here is a very good document as well.

1610

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Where do I get one of those documents?

Mr O'Toole: You could easily call a number here in the book. Call my constituency office: 905-697-1501. Call my office and we'll get you one. It's like a report card. We're accountable and accessible. It's not politics; it's doing what we said. There are a number of issues within this document — Madam Speaker, I'm going to get myself back to Bill 15.

There are several major things with respect to the motion. I think it's important to know the content of the motion. I believe there are eight parts to Bill 15 itself. With respect to the time allocation motion, it's important for members to know that we're trying to get on with the budget, to managing the province the way the people elected us to do it. Certainly we've got to be responsive and listening all the time, but it's critical — all taxpayers in Ontario are now worried about making sure the legislation is in place so the reforms can be made.

Part I of the act makes some subtle amendments to the Income Tax Act.

Part II deals with the Corporations Tax Act. It should be recognized that we're reducing tax on small business by 50% over the next eight years. That's another assist to small business.

Part III deals with the Highway Traffic Act. I could go into some detail. Specifically, in that area it's dealing with some fees, schedules and fines.

Part IV: The member for Nepean covered this in some detail as I listened quite anxiously to him. He talked about the land transfer tax. The importance of this to the first-time home buyer and the home building industry, I can tell you, in my riding of Durham East is absolutely breathtaking. Every subdivision that sat idle for nine, seven, six years during the lost decade is now loaded with bricks and workers putting up new homes for people who are moving to Durham East. To me, it's almost the most satisfying part of my job, because I was a regional local councillor before I came to Queen's Park and I was part of that process, but the economy and the fundamentals just weren't there. Something was missing, a kind of confidence. I sense that the confidence is back, but we must never be arrogant about that. We must always listen, be sensitive and respond to the needs of the people of Ontario. That's what a government is supposed to do.

There are some other subtleties to this that because the person out there elects us to look at this information — part V deals with the Ontario Loan Act. Of course the point was made earlier that the province, like any government, borrows money to pay its payroll and other commitments. Taxes are a part of revenues that sometimes aren't in the same time frame as the expenditure side. This

borrowing is to take care of business here at Queen's Park, in fact to transfer money to the schools, the hospitals and to the universities and municipalities.

Part VI deals with the Ontario Lottery Corp. I would expect there would be some outrage. I'm not a big supporter of the casino stuff, but by the same token, those commitments were made by the two previous governments, whether it's the roving charities or the Casino Windsor site. Those were decisions made on different days. But what this part of the bill does, and I particularly like this part, is to allow the Legislature to appropriate for the purpose of its expenditures; to include directions in areas such health care, charities and non-profit corporations. So now it's formalized. The government has formalized where some of that revenue from the gambling is going, and that's appropriate. We're here to govern.

I won't stand here and criticize the Liberal government for bringing in the roving charities and the NDP government for bringing in other forms of gambling. What we tend to be doing is managing what we inherited. What could you expect a sensible, business-oriented government to do?

Part VII is the Retail Sales Tax Act. One small piece in that that is interesting is the elimination of the tax on the 1-800 and 1-888 numbers, that series of numbers. I think that helps small business. We see advertisements on television all the time about it.

Part VIII deals with the Tobacco Tax Act, allowing certain persons to collect that tax.

There are some technical amendments in this that I think the ministry people themselves need to make sure they have the right schedules and regulations in place.

I've systematically gone through the time allocation motion dealing with Bill 15. I've talked about the budget itself, which is really what the bill is, and I've given some insight into the Liberals' position, or at least as much as anyone could imagine what their position was.

I think it was Minister Manley of industry, trade and whatever, the federal minister — as the member for Nepean said, John Manley was the minister who said that tax cuts equal jobs. I think it's worth repeating for the record. In fact, I thank the member for Nepean for bringing it.

I have some respect for Paul Martin, a fiscal conservative. That's as clear as looking out the window. He's very concerned about balancing the budget, very proud of that. Why did he balance the budget? I think it's the Ontario economy that's done it. Look at the sales tax revenue alone from Ontario with a healthy economy, what it did to help balance the federal budget. We're in partnership together; let's not try and divide federal and provincial issues.

Here's what Mr Manley said: "Taxpayers have more money in their pockets." Thank goodness. Look at the retail sales report just put forward this week: 12% increase in retail sales. Where is that new disposable income coming from? This government: Mike Harris, Ernie Eves and this government. Why do I say that? Those 360,000 net new jobs are people who are now working and paying income tax. Where is that money coming

from? The tax break. Not only are there more people working, more people have more disposable income. It's so clear.

I just want to finish off with Mr Manley's statement. I think it's very timely. "Taxpayers have more money in their pockets and therefore they have more money to spend." Federal Liberal Minister John Manley said tax cuts increase domestic consumption." In fact, it's what we've been saying. Tax cuts equal jobs.

Madam Speaker, it's been a pleasure. I share my time quite willingly with the member for Dufferin-Peel, Mr Tilson. Thank you for your attention this afternoon.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I wanted to add to the debate on the resolution of Mr Sterling, a time allocation motion with respect to Bill 15, basically a bill that implements the provisions set forth in the budget that the Minister of Finance introduced several weeks ago.

We have debated on this bill for three days. I think the total time is in excess of eight hours. I must confess, I can't understand why the opposition is giving us so much grief with respect to a bill the basic intent of which is to reduce the taxes in this province.

We have stated over and over for many years in our party, going back to the Liberal reign, that this province had become overtaxed. During the reign of the Liberal and New Democratic Party governments the taxes had been increased in excess of 60 times.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): Sixty-five.

Mr Tilson: Sixty-five times, someone says. The government has already announced 30 tax cuts. The budget proposals, of course, propose 36 more tax reductions. I must say I find it difficult to understand the opposition, who are not in favour of tax cuts. Otherwise, why would we be opposing this process?

Mr Wildman: Part V. It's your \$5-billion loan.

Mr Tilson: All I know is that we have debated Bill 15 for eight hours. There has been extreme opposition from both the New Democratic caucus and the Liberal caucus, opposing this bill, and on it continues. They say, "You should be reducing the debt." I'll tell you something. It was because of you — and I've had this out with the member for Algoma before on his comments about the debt of this province. It was your party that set the debt of this province —

Mr Wildman: You're wrong.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Tilson: It's now up to, what, \$100 billion and it's increasing —

Mr Wildman: You raised it.

Mr Tilson: That's not true.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Tilson: I'm sorry, Madam Speaker, through you to the member for Algoma, the issue with respect to the debt of this province was caused by the New Democratic government and the Liberal government, who increased the debt up to \$100 billion. The interest on that naturally is going to increase.

1620

We promised to eliminate the deficit of this province. We promised to stop spending more than was coming in.

That's what these two governments over here did, the Liberal and the New Democratic governments did. That's what they did. They continued to spend more than was coming in. Naturally, you bankrupted the province. That's exactly what happened.

The purpose of this bill is to reduce the taxes in this province to help increase confidence, to encourage people to come and invest here, to set up new businesses here and to create jobs here.

When you talk about the net loss of the former New Democratic government, it was a 10,000-job net loss. It was terrible. Of course there's going to be a loss. Who'd want to invest in a province where the taxes had increased to one of the highest in North America? Our whole aim is to reduce the taxes of this province.

I hope that the two opposition parties come to their senses and ultimately support this bill, which will go to the standing committee on justice. There are two days, June 8 and 9, for further debate and hearings. There will be clause-by-clause debate on June 11 and ultimately we'll return for third reading, where there will be more debate. We will have had all kinds of debate on this bill, which I believe the majority of the people of this province support, which is the reduction of taxes to get the economy back to where it should be.

I have mentioned what this tax bill does, the number of tax reductions. One of the main implementations of Bill 15 is to accelerate the final phase of the tax to July 1, 1998, which is half a year ahead of schedule. At that time, we will have honoured our commitment.

The Ontario personal income tax rate is set as a percentage of the basic federal tax. In 1995, the Ontario tax rate was 58% of the basic federal tax. This bill, Bill 15, which came from the budget, of course, will complete the 30% tax rate cut. Effective July 1, 1998, the Ontario personal income tax rate is proposed to be reduced from 45% of the federal tax to 40.5% of the basic federal tax.

Members of the opposition will say: "Where is it? Where are those savings?" We all know where the savings went. They were taken by our cousins in Ottawa, the federal Liberals in Ottawa. That's where a lot of the loss has occurred.

But I must say I am convinced, as I would submit to all in this House, that the whole idea of optimism and the desire to invest in this province has returned. One of the reasons is because we are again returning to the lowest tax rate in this country.

All Ontario taxpayers benefit from the tax cut. Enrichments to the Ontario tax reduction and the introduction of the Fair Share health care levy ensure that the income tax cut is distributed fairly. The average reductions in Ontario tax would range from a low of 18% for taxpayers reporting incomes in excess of \$255,000 to 49.6% for taxpayers reporting incomes of less than \$15,150.

Those are the substantial cuts across the board for the low-income earners in this province. The tax cut for their income tax will be fairly substantial and for others it will much less.

All kinds of statements have been made, and I am just going to quote a few of them. Quite frankly, I think the majority of the people in this province support tax cuts.

In the Cornwall Standard-Freeholder of May 6, 1998, the editorial stated: "Mike Harris's only sin is living up to all his pre-election promises. His government had the political will to take the bull by the horns and make the necessary cuts, while reducing taxes. The fact is, Ontario is better off today than it was when the Harris government was elected three years ago."

That's a question that needs to be asked: Are we better off now than we were when we took office? I submit we are. There are more jobs, there are less taxes, income earners are earning more, there are more jobs. The economy is booming and I would submit it's because of a whole slew of policies, one of which is the tax cuts.

Continuing on with this editorial: "Business, especially small business, which is the backbone of the economy, is more willing to invest in Ontario than it was three years ago...and the booming economy is testimony of this fact."

I think that's the true test. The test is, what is small business prepared to do? They're prepared to invest more. My friend from Durham East indicated the various amendments to the Corporations Tax Act and how that's going to affect the small business people in this province. Naturally there are more small businesses developing, more small businesses expanding, and that indeed has been the backbone of this province.

I'll conclude very shortly, because I know there are other speakers from the opposition who wish to address this resolution.

From the Windsor Star on May 6, speaking of the budget: "There were 36 tax cuts in all in this budget, many of them aimed at a private sector which Eves says is on track to reduce unemployment to 6.2% within the next two years."

That's something that needs to be considered. What are we doing to encourage jobs to come back? What are we doing to encourage unemployment to be reduced in this province? I submit that tax cuts are one of several things that need to be done to make that come about.

"Together, the tax cuts and the social spending sound wonderful. It had the opposition immediately hissing with envious anger and claiming that adding \$1 billion to health care is still a 'cut.' Intelligent voters will recognize their desperation.

"The opposition parties are right about one point, however. Ontario is still spending beyond its means. The deficit, projected to be \$4.2 billion this year, could be cut faster. We are still spending 16 cents of every dollar — as much as we spend on all social services combined — on interest payments to carry a debt load of \$105 billion."

I suppose one could put all the money into reducing the deficit, but the point is that this is a formula. We have to do a number of things to make our economy boom; tax cuts are one, reducing the deficit another, and a whole slew of things need to be done at the same time.

I will conclude by quoting a couple of comments from the Ottawa Sun, which also was on May 6.

Mr Wildman: A rather unbiased periodical.

Mr Tilson: My friend says it's an unbiased periodical, but I'm going to read it anyway. He may learn something. It says:

"Listen to yesterday's words more closely" — referring to the budget and the comments from the two opposition leaders — "personal and business tax cuts, a lower than expected deficit, record job creation, robust economic growth, soaring consumer confidence.

"Sounds an awful lot like the bold vision of Ontario promised by the Tories when they first unleashed their common sense agenda on the province.

"Yes, it was a vision that came with a good deal of sacrifice.

"Because, before Ontario could re-establish itself as the economic engine of Canada, before the government could pull the province out of its economic tailspin caused by years of mismanagement and overspending, the Tories warned they first had to get a firm control on the reins.

"And the Tories have done exactly that, as the strong fiscal balance sheet in yesterday's budget clearly shows."

Finally, they say: "And yes, it's even time for more tax cuts, as much as the opposition whines that Ontarians don't deserve a fiscal dividend.

"When the opposition is reduced to complaining that the province could have achieved a balanced budget faster without tax cuts, you know they're bankrupt of ideas."

I would encourage all to support Mr Sterling's resolution.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): What we are confronting once again is yet another time allocation motion. For the people who watch the deliberations in this House, they should know that means the choking off of debate, the ending of debate, on a specific bill.

1630

This bill is very comprehensive. As the Liberal spokesperson in the field of finance and economics, Gerry Phillips, member for Scarborough-Agincourt, has pointed out on a number of occasions, there are a lot of complications to this bill. There are some parts of it which are supportable and there are other parts which are not.

What a lot of people don't know is that the government put in this bill something that would grease the skids for its new and expanded gambling policy. As I say that I hear thunder on the outside of this building, so clearly there's an indication of disapproval with the government policy on gambling, and I certainly agree with that disapproval that is being expressed in the form of thunder this afternoon.

I was perturbed this afternoon that the government members, instead of speaking to the motion, wandered all over. The Speaker said that was quite all right, and I knew when there was a subsequent Speaker in the chair, because we were talking about a time allocation motion, he would be as liberal in his interpretation as the previous Speaker was. I just wanted to let this Speaker know that that indeed was the case earlier when people were engaging in extraneous arguments; not my friend from

Dufferin-Peel of course, but others were engaging in extraneous arguments.

What we're seeing is a pattern developing. The member for Ottawa West has calculated, I think he said, 57 time allocation motions or maybe even more. The member for Nepean goes over every day with things for the NDP to use against the Liberals. They should be a little bit suspicious of that: that Guy Giorno is providing things for the government caucus that they then give to the NDP.

I don't say much about the NDP because I know the enemy's over there. I wouldn't want to read Bob Rae's observations this weekend from the Ottawa Citizen, I believe it was. There were some observations which were made.

Here is an article that deals with the conflict between the member for Ottawa-Rideau and the member for Nepean over some bill that would affect their local municipality. The NDP used three of their statements — in fact I thought it was a rather interesting way to do it — to read the letter that Garry Guzzo wrote to the government whip about how he was being treated as compared to the member for Nepean. I think that's what the member for Nepean handed to me right now, a copy of that letter, and wishes me to read it. But I don't have time to read that. If the Conservatives want to fight among themselves, I'm not getting in the middle of that battle. I would prefer to deal with other issues.

In particular, I want to deal with some matters that relate not to Bob Rae's comments — although if the Liberal critic finds them somewhere I may have to read them into the record. I have them in this pile, but heaven knows where they would be at this time in this pile of interesting material that I have.

The headline says, "Harris Right, Rae Says." I think that's probably a misinterpretation of what Bob Rae had to say when he says, "Harris Right." I don't think that's what he said. I think he may have made statements that said, "Some of the things the government is doing have some validity," because —

Mr Baird: All that has taken place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Member for Nepean, you had your turn.

Mr Bradley: I have a Saturday, May 30, Ottawa Citizen. The member hands it to me. That must be the Ottawa Sun, because it doesn't say anything here about that. It says, "Rae Says No to Tax Hikes, Deficits."

I've been challenged by my friends in the New Democratic Party when I talk about the tax cuts. I've been challenged by them to deal with the issue of tax cuts, and here I see:

"Former Ontario Premier Bob Rae admits that his views on governing have evolved so much that he no longer needs an adversary in debate — he can argue both sides...."

"He said the cuts Premier Mike Harris has made to the province's social safety net in pursuit of a balanced budget have had a devastating effect."

In fact he says that they've had a devastating effect, but he does agree with certain of the other policies. What he is talking about in essence is the tax cut. So the next time I get asked by my NDP friends about that — I'm not going to do it now because I want to deal with bigger fish — I will have to quote the former Premier, the leader, the guru of the NDP on tax cuts and so on. I'll just put this one over here for now, and perhaps if I get a chance I'll come back to it.

I would have thought we would be dealing this afternoon with legislation that would be enhancing the funding of hospitals in this province. I heard the minister give an answer in the House this afternoon that said that hospitals are well off, that the government is investing all kinds of moneys in hospitals, and yet virtually everybody I talk to, often unsolicited — people come up to me and say, "You wouldn't believe the experience I had in a hospital."

I was at a funeral home yesterday. I had an aunt who passed away at the age of 86, certainly a very aged person, who lived a wonderful life. One of my relatives came up to me at that time and described a situation that had happened in a hospital. This is not untypical. Everywhere I go, people come up to me and say, "You should see what it's like being in a hospital today," compared to even five or 10 years ago. It's substantially different: fewer people to work in the hospital, fewer people not only in the medical end of things but, for instance, cleaning. Some people will say, "The hospital room was actually dirty." A woman I saw on the weekend — I think it was at a folk arts festival event — came up to me and said, "I was in the hospital and they didn't change the bed for six days." I know this is anecdotal evidence, but you keep hearing this time and again from people and you wonder, is it just an isolated incident or is this typical?

What I have found out is that it is typical, that people who have frequently been in the hospital because of ill health have noticed a major shift in the kind of care that's available. That can be attributed 100% to the fact that this government has withdrawn funding from hospitals in the province. Not only that, but today it kicks people out of the hospital — what's a better term than "kicks out"? It discharges people from the hospital quicker and sicker, as the member for York South says. In other words, people who still require some additional care have to leave rather quickly.

Nobody is suggesting that people should use it as a rest home. Nobody is suggesting that at all. But what we are seeing now are people who have to leave the hospital in much worse physical, medical condition than was ever the case before.

Where I saw this, an example given to me, was Linhaven nursing home in St Catharines. It's a senior citizens' home and it has a significant nursing component. When I met with them to talk about their latest cut in funding, the people who are responsible for the home and those who are patients or residents or who provide assistance to people or their families all said to me that the people who come out of the hospital now require more extensive and intensive care than was ever the case before. At the same time, they are withdrawing funding

from Linhaven, meaning there is going to be less care for those people.

Because people are living to an older age, we have more people with diseases which seem to hit people in their senior years far more than others. I think of Alzheimer disease and other diseases of dementia, where the patients require just about 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week service and care, or people with severe Parkinson's disease or other debilitating diseases who require this kind of assistance. It's just not there in the hospitals any more.

You talk to the nurses and they are run off their feet today. They are doing their paperwork; they are in charge of several patients at one time. I heard of one case where a doctor went and cleaned an operating room, I guess it was. He had to clean it himself, because somebody had to do it before an operation could take place.

You hear this constantly, and these are hospitals which traditionally over the years have endeavoured to give good service but have had to lay off so many people and have had so much funding withdrawn that they can't provide the same service.

Now, this is disconcerting. If you talk about, "The road is bumpy," I don't like it and I don't think anybody else does — "The road is rough," or something like that, or it isn't up to the standards I'd like. That's something I don't like but that I can probably put up with in difficult economic times. I think, though, that virtually everybody in Ontario would want to see our hospitals adequately funded.

1640

The so-called hospital restructuring commission representatives will be showing up in St Catharines — it's like Darth Vader showing up in St Catharines — on Thursday to talk to people, in this case in a preliminary way. I wish they'd stay out of the Niagara Peninsula. I wish we didn't have these people who have really gone around closing hospitals and forcing hospitals to merge and reducing services around the province. I wish they would stay out of the Niagara Peninsula. I wish they wouldn't be anywhere in Ontario, but if I can be parochial, I don't want them there because I know what the agenda's going to be. It's going to be closing hospitals, it's going to be radically changing the role of certain hospitals, and it's going to mean \$43 million a year less in operating funding for hospitals in our area.

The Niagara Peninsula has, per capita, the oldest population in Canada; that is, the oldest population of people 55 years and over. I understand we've now surpassed Victoria, BC, which used to have that particular statistic to be proud of. We have that statistic today. It is said then, "You're going to need a lot of chronic care facilities and home care," and that is true. We will need far more than we have today. But we will also need more acute care beds. The reason is that seniors in their advanced years in failing health require not only chronic care — that is, long-term care — but also more often need acute care.

When I look at the budgetary policy of this province, I worry about that. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt

most appropriately said to me and others the other day in the House — I was listening to his speech — “Do you understand that this government is now saying somehow it’s going to take the money from its so-called charity casinos,” or, as I call them, the new Mike Harris gambling halls that are going to be forced upon communities across this province, “and that’s what’s going to be there for health care”? In other words, if they do well, health care will get more money; if they don’t, tough luck for people in the health care field. I think, and my colleague will correct me if I’m wrong, there is a provision in this bill that deals with that.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): Yes.

Mr Bradley: He says there is.

This bill allows me an opportunity to say this again: I think the government is moving in a wrongheaded direction with these so-called charity casinos. They’re using the casinos as a front to try to justify getting their paws on more money from the vulnerable, the desperate and the addicted people, who are predominantly the people who will be found most often at these so-called charity casinos.

We have already in Ontario some casinos established. I’m not unrealistic enough to go around saying that tomorrow you’re going to close Windsor and tomorrow you’re going to close Niagara Falls. They’re tourist destination casinos, although in Niagara Falls, as my colleagues will know, we’ve experienced some real questions about how the final group was chosen and what was in its proposal which would make it a compelling choice.

I had hoped with this tourist destination casino that the bid that would win would be one which emphasized all of the tourist attractions and wasn’t just a casino bid. A convention centre, for instance, would be great for Niagara Falls; perhaps an aquarium, perhaps a world-class golf course, perhaps some other attractions that would have people who come to Niagara Falls naturally, because of the natural beauty, stay in Niagara Falls. Instead we’ve got one and there are a lot of questions about it: Who was involved in it, who wasn’t involved in it and so on. I don’t want to get into the details of that this afternoon, but I just put out there the fact that there’s a cloud now over that. I would have preferred that whatever choice was made, it would have been a choice that emphasized other tourist attractors as well as the tourist destination casino it had.

But going into these charity casinos, they aren’t going to be tourist attractors. They’re not going to have a bus coming in from Rochester, New York, to Brantford or to Sudbury or Timmins or Kirkland Lake. I just use those as the communities some people might be proposing.

That is simply going to take money out of the local community. So if you’re a business person in the local community, you won’t be cheering that. Oh, you may get a few people from the little villages around, from some of the small towns around, who will come in to spend their money in that city and therefore not spend it in their own community. But if you’re running a business, that’s

discretionary funding that people have. They’re going to be spending it there instead of at major department stores, small businesses we have, on services and businesses which I think are much more productive for our communities than these charity casinos.

Why is the government moving forward with it? Why does this bill that you’re trying to ram through the House now contain references to it? It’s simply greed on the part of the government. The Mike Harris government is addicted, as are so many governments — not just this government — to these revenues. Governments, and I think people all over, have figured out that if you ask the average person out there, “Would you like tax increases?” they’re going to say no. That’s what you’re going to find with people. So when they saw the resistance to this, what governments around this country and other places started to do was to find more painless ways of taxing people. They tax people who are desperate, people who are vulnerable to this kind of addiction and people who are actually addicted to it.

It’s a shame on all governments that continue to escalate gambling opportunities. It’s time to call a moratorium. I’m not saying you have to go back and end the 6/49 and all those things. I’m not saying that. I’m a realistic person. I’m not even going to condemn the government in those terms. I’m saying to the government now, call a halt to it. If you had trouble with the contracts for the major casinos, I can tell you that you’re going to have trouble with some of the minor contracts for the charity casinos, the Mike Harris gambling halls that they want to put in various communities.

This government has tried bribery. I don’t mean that in the most sinister sense; I mean it in the sense that they have said to communities, “If only you’ll take these VLTs” — they’re electronic slot machines. Now they’ve changed that and said: “If only you’ll take these regular slot machines, we’ll pay you an administration fee. We know that because of government cutbacks and downloading of responsibility to the municipalities that you need this cash.” That’s the bribery out there. Then there’s some coercion used, the suggestion that somehow, “Your charities won’t get this money if you don’t approve them in your community.” The government, I understand, was even funding a group, Charities First Ontario, that was trying to promote these around the province.

What’s disconcerting is to see some of the people who now are taking up the banner for it. A person I had a lot of respect for on Metro council, Paul Christie — he was a member in the east end of Toronto. I’ve always had a lot of time for Paul in terms of what he has done on council. When I was Minister of the Environment I worked with Paul, who was working with the city. I was really disappointed to see — he was an opponent when he was on council. He did not get re-elected to council on this occasion; he did not go back on council. He was hired now to promote these so-called charity casinos.

If nothing else will work, I’m going to get the commissioners after them. Commissioner Brown is here this afternoon. He must know the problems that can emanate

from these so-called charity casinos, the Mike Harris gambling halls. He was out on the protest line against his own government, against Mike Harris, over the property taxes, marching with them, so I think he'll be out marching against the new Mike Harris gambling halls, because as a member of the crime commission he would know of the problems that can emanate from these kinds of so-called charity casinos around the province.

Mr Phillips: The police say that legal gambling doesn't eliminate illegal gambling.

Mr Bradley: That's a good point, and the Speaker will allow me to respond to that, though I'm never supposed to respond to interjections. The police have said that — I've seen that on many occasions — that legalizing gambling or getting the government into it doesn't stop illegal gambling. All it does is expand gambling opportunities. It makes people feel as though they're legitimate when they might be engaging in it.

1650

That's what this bill says. A lot of people say, "This is a tax cut bill." There are some good provisions in this bill. My colleague would agree that there are some provisions in this bill that are good. That's why you almost want to vote for some bills, because they have some good provisions, but the government always puts five or six things in them that make them not supportable, and then, with heavy heart, we have to vote against a particular bill.

I have mentioned the gambling and the fact that they say these gambling revenues are going to go to hospitals. Anybody I know operating a hospital, I say to my friend from Agincourt, certainly wants to have more reliable funding than that. They say: "If it's worth having a good hospital system, then let's have appropriate taxes for that. It's up front, everybody will know what they're paying for and we'll have a good system."

My friend from Etobicoke-Humber will well recall. If we weren't knocking on doors, he and I were probably sitting there on the same night in May 1995 when our good friend Mike Harris was on television answering Robert Fisher of Global TV, one of the questioners during the all-party leaders' debate. When they asked about health care, Robert Fisher asked, "Does this mean that hospitals are going to close?" The member for Scarborough West will recall well the solemn promise of the Premier. He said, "Certainly, Robert, I can guarantee you, it is not my plan to close hospitals." Well, 35 hospitals I've counted so far that have been either closed or pushed together, without volunteering to be pushed together, in this province.

All I read is, "We kept our promise, another promise kept." Here was a promise that was very vital to the people of this province which has not been kept. I did notice that in the Minister of Health's own riding and the little surrounding area, I don't think any hospital has closed. I think that's coincidence. I don't want to make any accusations. I think that's totally coincidence.

Mr Phillips: One reopened.

Mr Bradley: In the Minister of Finance's riding, one of them reopened. In Scarborough it's probably not the

same story, because there are many in the new overall Toronto. There's no Scarborough any more; this government voted Scarborough out of existence. All over Toronto now they've closed several hospitals. People from the surrounding area rely on those Toronto hospitals, many of which have a specialty.

I'm very concerned when I see that happen. I wish the hospital commission would stay home. If they close the QEW that day and the hospital commission is unable to make it, I will be sorry for all of us who are commuters along the QEW, or if they shut down the trains or the buses, but at least the commission wouldn't be there. They hover around the community as though they're vultures, waiting to get at our hospitals.

Too many people in our communities have raised too much money over the years, hard-earned money, have made investments, have made sacrifices in our hospitals to see them disappear. We need in St Catharines the Hotel Dieu Hospital, we need the General hospital, we need the Shaver Hospital, which is a chronic care hospital, we need the Niagara rehabilitation centre. We need these facilities. You can't close them down, because even now they find that some nights they have to turn people away because the hospital is full and they can't take any more people. In the emergency department from time to time there are people who cannot get into bed and have to be served in the emergency area of a hospital. Not as satisfactory as it would be otherwise.

I don't want to see those people down in the Niagara region unless they're coming with good news, unless they're saying, "The government is repenting," unless there is a conversion on the road to Damascus by Mike Harris and he's going to say, "We're not going to close any more hospitals," that the people of St Catharines will not have to put up with the closing of hospitals because Mike Harris wants to close them.

My friend from Brockville, my good friend the former Solicitor General, the member for Leeds-Grenville, must feel that pain when he sees the largest employer and a needed psychiatric facility going up in flames because the commission says, "Oh, we don't need that hospital any more."

That gets me into another area that many of us must recognize today. I think it's a major mistake, and I don't care who did it or when they did it: The closing of psychiatric hospitals is a mistake. The crime commissioner is here, and he would have heard in some of his discussions with people out there the problems with ex-psychiatric patients or psychiatric patients who are on the streets or end up in jail, the anguish of their families, people with schizophrenia who by no fault of their own have an affliction which requires medication, which requires treatment, who are simply out on the streets at this time because they don't have a place to go. It's all well and good to talk about closing psychiatric hospitals, but if you don't have the services in the community, if you don't have the hospital care in the community, then you are doing them no favour. The Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital is going to be closed, and there are people from

the Niagara Peninsula who have utilized that service over the years.

So I lament this government imposing yet another closure motion because they want to close down debate.

I suspect they'll be bringing in a bill this month which will permit the Americanization of our political system; that is, where money is king in election campaigns. All we have to do is look south of the border and see the trouble that everybody from the President's office down to the local offices is experiencing as a result of accusations about funding of campaigns, fund-raising and expenditures during campaigns.

What this government wants to do now — and we made some progress. Certainly when Bill Davis was in power, the three parties got together and came up with a formula; we came up with the election finances commission, the Liberal government and the NDP government, and we have a system that's not perfect but is far better than it was before when there were no controls.

Now this government wishes to allow much larger donations coming into the coffers of the political parties and individual candidates. That means those people could have or could be perceived to have far more influence. In other words, the wealthiest and the most powerful people would have the most control over the system as a result. Not only can you make larger contributions under the Conservative plan, but also you can make larger expenditures, so that a campaign could be almost bought. The party with the most money — in other words, which has the friends in powerful places, the richest friends, and is able to gather the most money — is going to have the most influence in election campaigns.

They want to shorten the election campaign so that again there's less of a focus on the issues. They want to be able to have media campaigns, advertising throughout the campaign, again favouring those who have a lot of money or those who do favours for those who have a lot of money and get paid back with donations.

They want to have advertising — of course, pre-writ advertising we would expect. They want to increase the per riding expenditure limits by an average of 80%, to \$96,000 per riding. I'm trying to remember what we spent in our last campaign in St Catharines. I think it was about \$31,000, and now it is \$96,000. I know for sure the Conservative candidate, whoever it is, will have \$96,000, because if you don't have \$96,000 after all the great things you've done for your friends who have lots of money and who are powerful, I'd be surprised.

You want to also abolish the election finances commission. The election finances commission is the watchdog. It's the policing agency over spending and advertising.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: During the course of the drivel by the member for St Catharines, he did mention that the Minister of Health didn't close any hospitals in her riding. I would like to point out to the member for St Catharines and to you, Mr Speaker, that the Minister of Health has no hospitals in her riding.

The Acting Speaker: Member for St Catharines, you have the floor.

Mr Bradley: Of course I said in her part of the province, and so the member would know that that is the case. He just makes my point by getting up. I thank him very much for making my point.

1700

I want to say that if you abolish the election finances commission, you've taken away the watchdog. The crime commissioner knows about policing. He knows how important it is to have a watchdog.

Mr Wildman: That picture looked like he was in a police lineup.

Mr Bradley: I saw the picture of him and the two other members. They were in trench coats. They looked like — who's the fellow who's in the trench coat? Columbo. The three of them looked like Columbo.

Mr Wildman: I thought one of them looked like Peter Lorre.

Mr Bradley: Well, Peter Lorre perhaps. But there's a detective called Columbo, and they looked like Columbo in each of those cases.

But I see this as a move in the wrong direction. If any member says, "Well, in other campaigns, other people have spent more," I agree with them that that isn't right either. We have to get a system where money isn't king. The United States is a great example of what we don't want in terms of our electoral system.

I want to provide for my friend the member for Scarborough-Agincourt with an opportunity to elaborate on some of these issues perhaps a little more specific to the bill itself. I think it's extremely important that he do so, because, as he will point out, there are some provisions in the legislation which are supportable; I think he'll probably emphasize those which are not, because it's the role of the government to emphasize the others.

To those out there who say, "Look, why do you people in the opposition not praise the government from time to time?" there's a good reason. It's because Guy Giorno — who is making how much a year? I don't know, but \$90,000, \$100,000 a year. Guy Giorno and his crew go through the Hansards and they quote out of context what we say if we say anything good about the government. So we leave it to the government members, who themselves have a third hand specifically for patting themselves on the back. That's what we allow government members to do.

I want to, as I say, provide my friend with some opportunity to speak on this today, so I will now yield the floor to the eminent statesman, the deputy leader and the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, the Liberal finance critic, who has a reputation that is enviable and respect among all people of goodwill in this province. I yield to him now.

Mr Phillips: I am pleased to join the debate on the closure motion. I want to begin by saying that I think the public should be concerned about the frequency with which this Legislature is beginning to use closure motions. I'll give you a specific example of why the public should

be concerned. The problem is that when we start to use closure motions we essentially cut off debate. The government knows it can introduce a motion and can get that passed and then can get a bill passed literally the next day. It's a powerful tool.

I'll give you an example of the problem with that, which happened just last week. One of the major issues before us is property tax changes, property tax reform. We've now had four major pieces of legislation that have been before this Legislature. It is going to fundamentally change property taxes in the province of Ontario. I just say to all of us, "Get ready for the next five or six weeks," when our municipalities finally get from the province the legislation to begin to deal with the tax bills. I predict that most municipalities are going to have an enormous problem with it.

But here's the problem. The first bill we dealt with was Bill 106. That was about a year ago. Then the government introduced something called Bill 149 to fix Bill 106. Then they brought in something called Bill 164 to fix the previous two bills. Then they introduced something called Bill 16, but we were told: "This bill cannot go to committee. We are not going to allow any committee work on it."

Mr Bradley: No committee?

Mr Phillips: No committee on Bill 16, and it's a major property tax bill. It was just less than a week ago, last Wednesday afternoon, when my leader, Dalton McGuinty, asked the Minister of Municipal Affairs about Bill 16. He essentially said, "We are going to pass this afternoon a time allocation motion, a closure motion, that will force final reading on Bill 16 on Thursday." It would have been law last Thursday. Fortunately, the clerks and treasurers of the province of Ontario, the senior civil servants in the province, held a media conference at 1 o'clock last Wednesday afternoon pointing out the enormous problems in the bill.

I still remember it clearly. Last Wednesday afternoon, the government was forced to back down. They withdrew this time allocation motion. I still remember the minister in behind here talking to the senior civil servants when they recognized the bill was flawed. It should have gone to committee weeks and weeks ago, but because the government now has this tool where it can close off debate, we will have perhaps two hours of debate. This time allocation motion will be passed this afternoon and it can do whatever it wants with the bill. That is the problem with the bill.

Luckily, literally at the last moment, the government was forced to back down and tomorrow morning the finance committee will deal with a whole bunch of amendments that the government is proposing to the property tax bill. That's the problem we have when a government has these tools at its disposal to essentially cut off legitimate debate. The government thinks it can get away without having an opportunity for significant public input.

I think the government will find it has made a major mistake in not allowing significant debate on the property

tax bill. I will say this — I said it earlier today — the taxpayers of Ontario are going to be paying \$40 million a month in extra interest cost because the government has bungled this bill. It will be two months late in getting out and municipalities are laughing at us. They're laughing at the Legislature. They were all sitting, by the way, last Friday waiting for the assessment rolls. They had been promised that they would be delivered last Friday and all of our senior officials around the province were waiting for it. Then they get the message: "Oops, sorry, you won't be getting them. Some glitch." They really are laughing at us here.

Mr Wildman: Some of them are crying.

Mr Phillips: Some are crying, as the member for Algoma says.

I raise that point because when a government has the tools to not allow legitimate debate it makes for bad legislation, it makes for bad public policy and it makes for a public obviously that gets cynical about the process.

On the bill that we're dealing with now —

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Why didn't you vote against the motion last night?

Mr Phillips: I hear the judge barking over there.

Again, I say that we asked weeks ago for public hearings on Bill 16, but no, the government wouldn't allow that. Actually he's chairman of the committee, Mr Guzzo. He'll be there tomorrow morning. I have a feeling the minister won't even show up to defend the bill tomorrow. That's what I believe, although it's customary that the minister is there, and I hope he is there.

On to the closure motion here. There are significant elements in this bill that really deserve substantial debate. I'll talk about the one that my colleague from St Catharines raised first, that is, gambling. This bill allows for the province to introduce 15,000 slot machines across Ontario —

Mr Guzzo: Not nearly enough.

Mr Phillips: Mr Guzzo says, "Not nearly enough." There we are. We have it now.

Mr Guzzo: What about the 5,000 illegal ones that are already there?

Mr Phillips: He says it's 5,000 illegal. I say —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau, you don't have the floor, please.

Mr Phillips: Judge Guzzo obviously is in support of 15,000 slot machines, but I say this: Our senior police officials in the province of Ontario looked at this issue, did a study. They were engaged to do a significant study on illegal gambling and they said: "Be aware. Legalizing gambling does not eliminate illegal gambling." That was our senior police officers doing a study on this specific issue.

Mr Guzzo often says in the House, "Let's legalize it all and get rid of the illegal ones." All it will do is add 15,000 more slot machines, taking \$1 billion out of the hardworking people of Ontario. That's the amazing part of this bill. On the one hand, it cuts taxes because the government says we need to put more money in the hands of people; on the other hand, it legalizes 15,000 slot

machines that the government itself predicts will take \$1 billion out of the pockets of people in Ontario. You can't have it both ways. You can't say that leaving money in the pockets of people will stimulate the economy and then you want this bill — this is a taxing bill. This is a gambling taxing bill that will tax gamblers to the tune of \$1 billion a year.

1710

I say to the people of Ontario, surely this deserves a substantive debate. Surely this isn't something that we should be forcing into committee and giving, I think, a total of six hours of debate on it. It is fundamental to the province of Ontario.

I would go on to say that the government itself promised the people of Ontario that there would be a legislative accountability framework requiring a complete annual accounting for every dollar etc. Well, there it is: A few pages, with virtually no debate, and we are going to authorize 15,000 slot machines in Ontario that the government itself — these are the government's own numbers. Estimate of an annual flow at maturity, as they say: \$1 billion being lost in slot machines. Is that not something that's worthy of more than six hours of debate before we ram it through?

A second part of the bill is the tax cut. I would just say to the people of Ontario that we all understand the need to deal with the deficit. We all understand the need to get our fiscal house in order. But this bill finalizes a cut in personal income tax that represents a loss of revenue of roughly \$5 billion a year to the province.

You can say, "Well, why not have the tax cut?" I will say this: First, there's no question that the people who benefit the most are those who make the most, obviously. This is the government's own table on the tax cut. This says people making more than a quarter of a million dollars, more than \$250,000 a year, are going to get a tax break worth \$500 million. It is a substantial amount of money that is being given in a tax break. Remember, we've said to Ontario, "We have to cut our hospital funding by \$800 million because we have a financial problem," but we can afford a \$500 million tax break to people making more than a quarter of a million dollars a year.

I say this to Ontario: Recognize Mike Harris — and again, you can get a copy of the budget. You can see here that when Mike Harris became Premier, the debt of the province was \$88 billion. This year in the budget he has presented the debt of the province has gone to \$110 million. So Mike Harris has added \$22 billion to the debt of the province. That is \$6,000 for every household in Ontario. Every household in Ontario now owes \$6,000 more than it did when Mike Harris became Premier.

Is that good fiscal policy? Should the people of Ontario want to add \$6,000 to their household debt? Remember, the government is paying 8% interest on it. Each household is paying almost \$500 a year to pay the interest. That money is heavily as a result of a tax cut.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): They don't believe you, Gerry.

Mr Phillips: You say they don't believe me?

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I don't.

Mr Phillips: Look at the numbers, Bert. They're hiding the numbers from you. You'll have to get the budget out and look at it yourself. The Conservative members don't believe this because they've been told otherwise. Get it out and look at it yourself. What you do is you look on page 57 and you find the \$88 billion, Bert, and then it's \$110 billion. You subtract those two. That's \$22 billion. Then you divide it by the number of households in Ontario and it's \$6,000 a household. So I say to everybody in Ontario, you now owe \$6,000 more per household.

Is that good fiscal policy? You cut taxes and, yes, people making a lot of money get a break, but the hardworking, middle-class people of Ontario have had the province go out and borrow \$22 billion and now they're paying interest on it.

It's just a question one asks. If this were my own house or my own business — I ran businesses. I started two businesses. I had 300 employees. There is not a bank in Ontario that would have loaned me money if I had been prepared, when I was "running a deficit", to declare the kind of dividend Ontario has declared on taxes.

The numbers are there. That's why, I might add, the credit rating agencies — these are the people who get paid money to rate the creditworthiness of governments and companies — have not improved the Harris credit rating one bit, not one bit.

Mr Silipo: Somehow that doesn't bother them now. Somehow that doesn't matter now.

Mr Phillips: That's right. The Minister of Finance said —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: There is only one person who has the floor and it's the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. There are too many conversations going on. I will listen to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: I remember that Mike Harris sat here and Bob Rae sat there. When the credit rating of the province dropped — it used to be AAA and then it dropped to AA+, AA and AA-. Every time it changed, Mike Harris went at Bob Rae. He said: "This is a disaster. We can't have this happening. You're ruining Ontario." Now, three years later — Mike Harris has been in charge for three years — the credit rating has not moved a bit. It's exactly the same as it was when Bob Rae was Premier. So what's the significance of that? These are the objective people who rate the credit of the province of Ontario and each of them has said that you are putting at risk the financial health of the province of Ontario by implementing the tax cut before the fiscal house is in order.

That's the second major part of the bill, the tax cut, where we now find that Ontario has added \$22 billion to the debt. I find it useful to look at — this is the Investment Dealers Association of Canada. They produce quite a good fact sheet that I find helpful. If you look at this, Mr Speaker — you can't see the numbers from where you're sitting — it says that in 1994-95 the combined deficit of

the 10 provinces and the federal government was \$53 billion. In other words, the federal government and all the provinces were spending \$53 billion more than they were bringing it. That's unsustainable, as we all know.

Four years later, what has happened? It was \$53 billion four years ago. What is it in 1997-98, the year that just ended? It has gone down to \$5.2 billion. In other words, it's gone from \$53 billion to \$5.2 billion. What does that mean? Ontario last year had a deficit of \$5.2 billion. If you take all the other nine provinces and the federal government, they have a balanced budget now. They're gone from four years ago when they were a major part of that \$53 billion —

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Where did they start? How big was their hole, Gerry? You started this.

Mr Phillips: Mr Tsubouchi is barking. Use your math. The federal government had a deficit of \$37 billion and they got it down to zero. They got it to zero in four years. But Mike? Mike's been able to take \$10 billion to \$5 billion. He cut it in half. My point is this: It doesn't make sense for any organization that is faced with those kinds of challenges to be declaring a fiscal dividend before their fiscal house is in order? I don't think it does.

I'm going to conclude in a moment. I know Mike likes to say it's the tax cut that's making things work. The problem is, look in the budget and what does it say? It says it's exports that have driven the economy. That's what's made us so successful. In fact, on page 10 it shows in 1989 exports represented a little less than 29% of the economy, and now we find, in 1997, that it's 46%. It's the US economy, low interest rates, low inflation that is driving the economy. Frankly, any objective person would say it has not been the tax cuts that have driven the Ontario economy. In fact, the government itself says it's exports. That's what's created the jobs.

As we deal with Bill 15, with the time allocation motion, the gambling in here needs an airing. Nothing could make that clearer than the debate we've had over here during the last week on some of the problems being created now by gambling. Surely we're not going to allow this to go through with six hours of committee work.

Second, on the tax cut, yes, people love a tax cut. But recognize that you've had to borrow the money to give yourself the tax cut: \$22 billion Mike Harris has added to the debt, \$6,000 a household. Furthermore, it will be the middle class who will pay that, because those making the big incomes have had a very substantial cut on their income tax.

1720

Mr Gerretsen: In the few minutes I've got, I'd like to address two issues. The first issue deals with the closure motion here before us. You may recall that when this debate first started, the government House leader said, in a very pious way, that he wished that he didn't have to do this, but the budget had to be implemented by this Bill 16 and that's the reason he was bringing this time allocation or closure motion forward.

I think it's very interesting to note, and I think the people of Ontario should understand, that this bill was first introduced on May 7. We're now almost a month later. We're here for about another three weeks or so, maybe four weeks, until this session comes to an end. We're dealing here with a bill that contains 72 pages of recommendations on how the budget should be implemented.

Why, if this is such an important bill — it is, and he acknowledged that it is — why haven't we debated this bill in this House for a much more extended period of time already? We've had a total of about three days of debate on this. There's no reason we couldn't debate this for another two or three days, then send it to committee for at least two to three weeks and then bring it back here for third reading with all its various amendments.

We know, from the past record of this government, that there are going to be amendments needed. All you have to do is look at Bill 15, the property tax bill, the fourth time we're dealing with the property taxation system in Ontario, to know that this government keeps making mistake after mistake after mistake, especially when it comes to anything that has to do with taxation.

We had Bill 26 that dealt with that matter, then we had Bill 108, Bill 146, Bill 164, and now they have to come back with another bill. The same thing is going to happen with this bill. We know that if we're going to deal with it in a matter of six hours and then report it back to this House and deal with it in one session, I think that is totally unacceptable to the people of Ontario.

The other issue, and my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt has dealt with this as well, deals with the public debt in this province. It's very interesting that we know, according to the government's own budget documentation, that public debt in this province will grow from \$89 billion, the way it was in 1995 when you took over, to \$110 billion by the time we're through, something like a \$21-billion increase.

The government always like to talk about it in terms of, "That was the previous NDP government." We know they caused about \$40 or \$50 billion of that during the four or five years they were in power, but most of the other \$50 billion was caused by previous Conservative governments. As a matter of fact, when Davis turned the reins of government over to the Liberals back in 1985, the public debt in this province then stood at about \$40 billion, so if you look at the whole \$110 billion that there will be by the end of this year, or by the end of the next fiscal period, you have caused about \$62 to \$65 billion of the public debt.

Mr Wildman: About half of it.

Mr Gerretsen: About half of it, if not more than half of it. It's interesting that according to the government's own figures, the amount of money we spend annually in servicing that public debt has shot up from \$7.8 billion, which was the interest on the public debt back in 1995, to a projected \$9.2 billion, almost \$1.4 billion more in just interest payments, almost 20% of our budget being spent on interest costs, much more than the Ministry of

Community and Social Services. The interesting thing is that that budget, of course, is dropping dramatically with all the cuts you're making to the most vulnerable in our society. The amount of money we now spend in community and social services in this province is \$7.8 billion, well less than on the interest.

I will relinquish the rest of my time to the third party at this stage. The people of Ontario should remember that there are two issues at stake here. Number one is the fact that closure is once again being invoked, and I think the people should say, "Why is it being invoked on such an extensive bill?" Number two is that you, sirs, on the other side have caused the public debt of this province to increase by a further \$22 billion over the last three to four years when that was totally unnecessary.

Mr Wildman: I want to thank my friends in the government party and the opposition party for allotting us so much time in this debate. It's a shame. It is obviously the approach that the other two parties take in terms of recognizing the traditions in this House.

I would explain very seriously our concerns about this motion, because despite what most of the members have discussed in the debate, we are debating a time allocation motion. This is a time allocation motion introduced by the government House leader after three days of second reading debate on this very important and very complicated and extensive budget bill.

The government argues that they need to get the bill through to implement the main measures in the budget and that they can't afford more time for second reading debate. Frankly, if it were not unparliamentary, I might even be tempted to accuse the government House leader of engaging in sophistry in the few comments he made in this debate. He said the reason for the time allocation motion is that the opposition parties in the House were taking up so much time in second reading debate that the government, which he said wished to send this bill to committee, didn't have time to do it, so the government was being forced to bring in time allocation motions on this bill and on other bills. It's all the opposition's fault.

Frankly, the fact is this: This government could have brought the House back according to the normal calendar in mid-March. The Conservatives could have had a budget a month earlier, but this government said no, there was nothing of importance, nothing they had to have the House sitting for, so therefore they —

Interjections.

Mr Wildman: The members are barracking, but they obviously don't understand that their government House leader and their own government can't even manage the business of this House, much less the business of the province.

The fact is the budget could have been a month earlier. We could have had a reasoned, serious debate about the measures in the budget and there would have been no need — I believe there is still no need — to bring in time allocation on this bill. No one in the House has tried to filibuster debate on this bill, and yet we have a time allocation motion.

1730

I suspect there is one basic reason the government is trying to push this bill through without real debate, without committee debate, and that is because this government purports to be against public debt, and yet one of the most important parts of this bill that none of the government members wants to talk about — they only want to talk about those portions of the bill that deal with parts I and II, income tax and corporation taxes. That's all they want to talk about. None of them wants to talk about parts V and VI.

Part V deals with the Ontario Loan Act. Under this part of this bill, the Treasurer of this province is authorized to borrow up to \$4.6 billion, and there's a reason. Ironically it relates to the parts of the bill the members of the Conservative Party want to discuss. It relates to parts I and II. These deal with tax cuts. Ironically the \$4.6 billion that part V authorizes the Treasurer to raise in debt, in loans, is almost the exact amount it is going to cost the treasury to bring forward the income tax break.

Of course the government members don't want to admit that. They don't want to admit and they don't want the public to understand that this government is borrowing the money to provide a tax break to the people who don't need the money. This is a government that says they don't believe in debt, and yet as a result of this bill and their phoney tax scheme, this government has increased the debt of this province by \$22 billion.

Add that to the debt that was accumulated under previous Tory governments since the Second World War; that debt was about \$40 billion when the Liberals came to government. Add \$22 billion to it, and that's between \$60 billion and \$65 billion in debt that we owe to the Tories in this province, \$65 billion in debt. The total debt has increased under this government now to about \$110 billion. What we're saying is half of the debt in this province is accumulated because of Tory mismanagement.

This government doesn't want to discuss these matters. This government does not want to hear from the public, does not want to deal with —

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): You live in a glass house.

Mr Wildman: Mr Speaker, I don't mind. It's not surprising to me that the Tory members don't want —

The Acting Speaker: The Speaker minds. I mind.

Mr Wildman: I understand, but I also understand that the Tory members don't want to hear this because they don't want to understand that they have increased the debt and that they're being irresponsible in borrowing money to give a tax break to people who don't need it. That's why they've got a closure motion before the House.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): Tell that to the guy who is making 35 grand.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Lambton.

Mr Wildman: This government only wants to debate the first two parts of this bill. They don't want to have full debate on all of it.

What is part VI? This changes the Ontario Lottery Corporation Act. It repeals provisions related to video

lottery terminals, which is all right, but what's the other part? Under this part of the bill it adds health care and charities to the authorized list of purposes for the lottery corporation's net profits.

What does this mean? Because this government is lowering its tax revenues, it wants to increase revenues in other ways, and in order to increase revenues, it is going to increase gambling in the province.

What are we going to fund with this gambling? Up to now the lottery corporation's revenues and profits funded things like recreation programs in Ontario. But this government is cutting grants to recreation programs. They're not going to continue funding recreation. What are we now going to fund? We're now going to fund charities — that provide services that all of us want to provide in this province — and health care. For the first time in the history of this province we are now going to leave the wellbeing, the health of the people of Ontario to chance. We are going to determine how much money we have for health care based on a gamble.

We are moving to the position, frankly, of the Irish Sweepstakes. In that country for years they have funded their health care program through a horse racing operation. This government is simply going to add the funds for health care through the lottery corporation profits. It made sense to fund culture and recreation programs from those kinds of revenues; it makes absolutely no sense in a country that values health care the way Canadians do to fund health care by chance.

This is a government that says it is against public debt, and is increasing the public debt. This is a government that says they want to encourage and reinvest in things like health care. As a result, this is a government that does not want to have the whole story of this bill before the public and before the House. That is why the government House leader is bringing in time allocation and is closing off debate.

My concern is that at one time such a move would have been seen as a very serious matter by all members of the House — government members and opposition members. Unfortunately under this government it is becoming routine: this is the way the government approaches legislation: they simply close off debate.

One of the most important things in a democracy is the right of the people to be heard, the right of the people's representatives to express opinions even if they don't agree with the government's line. This is a government that does not believe in that approach, that does not believe in full debate, that wants to close off debate, and thus it becomes second nature almost to bring in motions to close off debate on legislation. This is a government that doesn't want to have the people understand what it's doing. It wants to force things through in a hurry so that people don't get the opportunity to understand the kinds of things the government is doing. I regret it. I'm opposed to it.

We will be opposing this time allocation motion because it's bad for this assembly and it's bad for democracy.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Silipo: I want to take the couple of minutes that are left before we have to vote on this to simply say that in addition to the concise and straightforward comments put forward by my colleague the member for Algoma, our House leader, Mr Wildman, there are a couple of other reasons why I find this particular motion in front of us offensive. I find all time allocation motions problematic, but this one particularly I find offensive.

Mr O'Toole: You guys had 17 of them.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Durham East.

Mr Silipo: One is that at no time did the government, through its House leader or anyone else, come forward and say to us: "We'd like to get this bill to committee. Will you cooperate in terms of how we can do that?" There was no discussion, there was no proposal, there was not even any suggestion. So to infer, as he did earlier on, that we held up this bill or are holding up this bill is completely inappropriate, Speaker, not to use other words that you would rule out of order.

The other reason is that we know that something really interesting is happening. You would expect, Speaker, particularly you as someone who's been around this place many a year, that the main bill this government has in this session that deals with implementing the main measures in its budget — because that's what this bill does; this is the budget bill — if it was going to go to committee, it would go to the finance committee because that's the committee that's got the purview to deal with all financial issues. That committee is in fact available to meet on this issue on the dates this motion suggests the committee ought to sit to deal with this bill.

1740

But that's not what we have in this motion. What we have in this motion is a direction that this bill will be referred not to the finance committee but to the standing committee on administration of justice. Why is that? Let me suggest one reason why that's happening — I think the reason — but let me suggest one reason because I don't want to be challenged on the basis of imputing motives.

We have, as an NDP caucus, put forward under the standing orders of this House a proposal that the standing committee on administration of justice deal with a matter which the government so far has consistently refused to deal with in a public way, and that is the whole issue of what happened around Ipperwash and the death of Dudley George. We have put that issue forward; we have called for a public inquiry time after time. The government has consistently refused to do that. We then have resorted to the only other measure that's left to us under the rules, which is to ask that in a committee of this Legislative Assembly a matter that is under the purview of the ministry which those committees deal with, that that issue be dealt with.

Lo and behold, the minute we did that, all of a sudden the government decides to send its budget bill, which should be going to the finance committee, to the administration of justice committee, because by doing that they prevent that motion and that issue from being discussed.

That's what this is about. It's got nothing to do with the opposition in any way delaying the budget bill, because we've only had three days of debate on this.

As I said, there's been no proposal — I may have missed part of one of the House leaders' meetings.

Interjection.

Mr Silipo: My House leader assures me that there has never been any proposal from the government House leader to say: "We'd like to get this bill in committee. What do we need to do? How can we work that out?" Nothing. All we saw is this time allocation motion.

This has got nothing to do with the need to get this bill through. It's got everything to do with wanting to make sure that the issue around Ipperwash does not get discussed in committee. That's what's driving this particular motion at this particular time to this particular committee.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I rise to speak in opposition to this motion today because I want the people who are watching to understand that what we're debating today is a time allocation motion. Basically, this is the opposition gag order being imposed upon it by this government.

Bill 15 is a bill that I would like to have had some time to be involved in debating, because I think it has a number of important elements in it that we need to deal with. One of them has to do with the changes to the Land Transfer Tax Act. I received a letter from the Windsor and Essex county real estate association recently. They wanted to know why the exemptions to the payment of land transfer tax were only available to persons who were buying new homes for the first time and not to persons who were buying used homes.

I think that's a good question that's really worthy of debate and I think it's something we should look closely at. At one time we wanted to stimulate the economy by encouraging the sale of new homes and that was a measure to do that. But I believe we want to try and provide that exemption so that people who are buying used homes are still able to avail themselves of that opportunity.

I would like to have had an opportunity to talk about the changes to the Ontario Lottery Corporation Act as well, because the changes that the government is introducing to repeal provisions related to video lottery terminals are something that we support, but the funding of health care through lottery revenues is something we're opposed to. We don't believe that's the way health care funding should be provided.

We know that lotteries bring a tremendous amount of money into our economy and that the lottery corporation is interested in increasing that revenue. Ironically, one of the ways they could be increasing revenue I believe is to be doing more outreach into the community by funding recreational facilities in communities and by doing things that they used to do, for example, the community mobile stage program. That was a program that used to provide mobile stages to various events in communities. It was a good public relations gesture, a good outreach gesture. It

was something that helped the Freedom Festival in my area to try and have a venue for entertainment facilities.

When people see those kinds of things happening in their communities they don't mind buying the odd lottery ticket every once in a while. However, when people see that this is a facility that's no longer available to their community, that the lottery corporation isn't interested in making that opportunity available, they might not think about buying lottery tickets in the future. I think it's an ill-conceived part of the lottery corporation's plan and I hope they reconsider the mobile community stage program and reinstate it so that the Freedom Festival can avail itself of that opportunity in the future.

The member for Scarborough-Agincourt was talking about the increased deficit being caused by the Tory tax scheme, and I was wondering during his speech what the Liberals would do to the Tory tax scheme if they were to come into government.

We know that the deficit still remains large, over \$4 billion, notwithstanding the fact that we are experiencing a very robust economy right now. The reason that it is experiencing that deficit is because of the tax scheme. We know that the deficit could be eliminated because of this robust economy. It's an economy that really is experiencing that robustness because of the strength of the US economy. We export a great deal of our products from the Windsor area, for example, into the United States. Minivans from the Chrysler assembly plant are exported into the United States. The value of the Canadian dollar in relation to the American dollar is a reason for that robust economy.

What people are really wondering is what would happen if there was a downturn in the economy. We're seeing cuts in health care and education and the deficit is still over \$4 billion in a robust economy. What if there's a little downturn? What's going to happen to those sorts of services?

One of the generators of income in the province is Casino Windsor, an initiative that was supported and established by the NDP government, which I am proud of. That has provided tremendous revenue to Ontario. However, we've seen mismanagement and incompetence on behalf of this government in dealing with the Windsor casino issue.

I asked a question a couple of weeks ago with respect to the opening date for the permanent casino in Windsor, what's going to happen to the temporary casino in the art gallery, what's going to happen to the riverboat, for example. I never got any answers with respect to those questions.

I'm happy that, notwithstanding the fact that the riverboat was supposed to sail away on June 10, today, finally, a representative from the casino corporation and from the gaming commission went down to Windsor, met with the mayor, met with the representatives from the art gallery and also met with representatives from Local 444 of the CAW, who represent the workers in there, and said that the riverboat is going to be able to stay until the new casino opens and that the temporary casino in the art

gallery is going to continue to operate until the new casino opens.

We're happy about that news, but we wonder what cost that's going to come at because we know that the lease expired on the riverboat and wasn't renewed because of the mismanagement and the failure of the Chair of Management Board to act in a timely manner. We wonder what the cost of extending the lease on the riverboat is going to be. However, we are happy that the Northern Belle Casino is going to continue to remain in operation after June 10 and that the people who work there, representatives of CAW Local 444, are going to be able to continue to work in the riverboat until the new casino is open.

Getting back to this time allocation motion, I think this indicates a disturbing trend that we see far too often in this Legislature, because really this is a gag order. Once again we are seeing the government try to reduce the opportunities we have to speak. On this time allocation motion, we've got less than half an hour to speak. That amounts to an abuse by a government that has a huge majority, that is able to impose its will on the opposition members. It should do that only on rare occasions, in my submission, because the opposition, the NDP members here, really do provide an important role, an important opportunity for the people of Ontario to express their views about what they think of this government's agenda. They're not just saying that they're going too far too fast; they're saying that they're going in the wrong direction on many things as well.

They're asking me questions: "Why do we see long waiting lists in the Windsor Regional Hospital, for example, when government revenues from things like Casino Windsor are increasing? Why is it that we're having cuts to education when the economy is doing so well?" People understand that the cost of providing the phoney tax scheme to those who are the most well off is something that somebody is going to have to pay. That payment is being made in the form of cuts to health care services, cuts to education and cuts to other services which have always been important public services in our community. That's something people are quite concerned about and something I'm opposed to. I don't think we should be offering a tax cut to those who are the most well off if the cost of doing that is going to be the deterioration of our health care system.

This government likes to think that what they're doing is creating a lot of jobs, that they're improving our economy, but listen to what the bond raters are saying. After all the work this government has done over the years, they finally got to the point where the NDP government was when we were in government as far as the opinion of the bond raters. It's not only people in Windsor-Riverside who are saying that this government is doing things in the wrong direction; the bond raters have their concerns as well. I think that's something we have an obligation to bring to the attention of people in Ontario. That's another reason why I oppose the imposition, once again, of a time allocation motion to try and prevent us

from having that opportunity to inform members of the public about our opposition to this government's agenda.

I could go on further about many of the criticisms and complaints I have about this government's agenda. I know we're going to have to vote on this motion notwithstanding my objections. My fear is that once again the government is going to use their majority to shut down the voices of opposition, and they do that to the detriment of the democratic process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Sterling has moved government notice of motion number 13. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour say "aye."
All those opposed say "nay."
In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be up to a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1755 to 1801.

The Acting Speaker: Those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Barrett, Toby	Johns, Helen	Saunderson, William
Beaubien, Marcel	Johnson, David	Shea, Derwyn
Boushy, Dave	Jordan, W. Leo	Skarica, Toni
Brown, Jim	Kells, Morley	Smith, Bruce
Carr, Gary	Klees, Frank	Snobelen, John
Cunningham, Dianne	Leadston, Gary L.	Spina, Joseph
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Elliott, Brenda	McLean, Allan K.	Tascona, Joseph N.
Eves, Ernie L.	Munro, Julia	Tilson, David
Ford, Douglas B.	Murdoch, Bill	Tsubouchi, David H.
Fox, Gary	Newman, Dan	Turnbull, David
Galt, Doug	O'Toole, John	Vankoughnet, Bill
Gilchrist, Steve	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Villeneuve, Noble
Grimmett, Bill	Pettit, Trevor	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Guzzo, Garry J.	Preston, Peter	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Rollins, E.J. Douglas	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hastings, John	Ross, Lillian	Young, Terence H.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Grandmaître, Bernard	Phillips, Gerry
Boyd, Manon	Gravelle, Michael	Pouliot, Gilles
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Cleary, John C.	Lessard, Wayne	Ruprecht, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Marchese, Rosario	Silipo, Tony
Cullen, Alex	McLeod, Lyn	Wildman, Bud
Duncan, Dwight	McLash, Frank	Wood, Len
Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 57; the nays are 26.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): There is a late show tonight. The Chair recognizes the member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I want to speak to my dissatisfaction with the answer from the Minister of Natural Resources on Thursday last, May 28. The question had to do with what evidence the ministry had in their files regarding the Ipperwash situation. I twice asked the minister if he had requested his staff or if he had searched the files within his own ministry to determine on what basis the engineer that was building Ipperwash Provincial Park told the first nations that there was a burial ground there. The minister did not, in either case, answer my question, and that's the basis for my dissatisfaction.

I want to go on to tell the public why this is so important. In 1995, the first nations at Ipperwash Provincial Park in August told the government of Ontario that they had evidence there was a burial ground at Ipperwash Provincial Park. They also had evidence that it was not properly looked after and they were going to enter the park and occupy it until the provincial government responded to it. The government ignored that. They knew about that in August and did nothing about it.

On September 4, 1995, a group of first nations entered Ipperwash Provincial Park, saying the reason they were there was that they believed, had evidence there was a burial ground. The government ignored that and then we had a most tragic incident where, for the first time at least in this century, if not longer, a first nations person died in an altercation with the OPP. An OPP constable was convicted of criminal negligence regarding the shooting, and it clearly turned into an issue that was a significant black eye for the province of Ontario.

The park is still closed. The surrounding community is still suffering as a result of it. Property values have dropped as a result of it. The government all along said, "There's no burial ground there; they're simply trespassing."

The shooting took place on September 6. On September 12, the federal government phoned the provincial government and said, "We have found within our files letters, including letters written by the provincial government's deputy minister, acknowledging receipt of the information that there was a burial ground there." The federal government said, "We found it in our files." They assumed the provincial government had it in its files, because it was all sent to the provincial government.

It proved that during the construction of the park, the Ontario government's own engineer said that he found an old Indian burial ground within the confines of the park. He said to the first nations, "Pass a motion calling for the provincial government to fence it off, and I'm sure they'll

comply." So the first nations chiefs did pass that. They passed a motion saying, "We are requesting the provincial government to fence off our burial ground." It went up to the federal Indian affairs ministry and then came back down here to Queen's Park.

It's very significant, so significant that the provincial government, the Attorney General's department, once that information became public, was forced to go to court and drop the charges of trespass against the first nations, because they had what's called a colour of right defence, that is, they had reasonable grounds to believe there was a burial ground there.

All I asked was that the minister go back to his office and search his files to find out if there was a burial ground there. He said, "I can't go to the park because it's not safe." I never asked him to go to the park. I asked him to go over to his ministry and find out, do those files exist? On what basis did the engineer conclude there was a burial ground there? This is absolutely fundamental to one of the most significant issues in Ontario, that is, what evidence does the government have in its own possession about a burial ground? I simply asked the ministry to go over to his files and he refused to answer; he still refuses to answer.

We now will hear from the minister. Will he now go back to his ministry, ask his staff to search the files to find out on what basis that engineer said, "Province, fence off this Indian burial ground"? I will now await the minister's answer to that question.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): If I can quote from Hansard to clarify this, the original question that was asked by the member opposite says, "I imagine you are aware that there is a letter that indicates that when your engineers, people working for the Ministry of Natural Resources — it says: 'When cleaning out this park recently, the engineer,' that is, the provincial engineer," and so on and so forth. The question later goes on to say, "This is quite a significant development." This is the original question by the member opposite, which is a little different than what is being requested here today in this question.

Mr Phillips: You're not even on the right date, John.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I believe this is the original question.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Why don't you research your answer?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I can tell the member opposite that we did in fact do the research, that this is a letter from 1937 that makes reference from a federal agent to the federal government. I believe the federal government put this letter out in 1995, if memory serves correctly, from an answer I've given previously in this House.

We also have an archaeological survey of Ipperwash Provincial Park in 1972. That report indicated that there were no finds made and recommended that no further archaeological work of any kind be carried out there. That was the MNR report from 1972, which obviously was some time after 1937.

I told the member previously — I've said in this chamber on a couple of occasions — that we will, when it is safe to do so, cooperate with the first nations and do whatever kind of reports we need to do.

Mr Phillips: Go to your files. It's there in your files, for God's sake.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. This House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock tonight.
The House adjourned at 1811.
Evening meeting reported in volume B.

ERRATA

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
18A	907	1	7	Jacquie Carr, Theresa Vince's daughter, was at the press prevent this from happening again. Jacquie Carr said
18A	907	1	17	

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		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)
		Nickel Belt	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Second Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 2 June 1998

Mardi 2 juin 1998

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Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 2 June 1998

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SMALL BUSINESS AND CHARITIES PROTECTION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PETITES ENTREPRISES ET DES ORGANISMES DE BIENFAISANCE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 16, An Act to give Tax Relief to Small Businesses, Charities and Others and to make other amendments respecting the Financing of Local Government and Schools / Projet de loi 16, Loi visant à alléger les impôts des petites entreprises, des organismes de bienfaisance et d'autres et à apporter d'autres modifications en ce qui a trait au financement des administrations locales et des écoles.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Pursuant to order of the House dated June 1, 1998, I am required to put the question.

Mr Eves has moved second reading of Bill 16.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The motion is carried.

NORTHERN SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DES SERVICES PUBLICS DANS LE NORD DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 12, An Act to provide choice and flexibility to Northern Residents in the establishment of service delivery mechanisms that recognize the unique circumstances of Northern Ontario and to allow increased efficiency and accountability in Area-wide Service Delivery / Projet de loi 12, Loi visant à offrir aux résidents du Nord plus de choix et de souplesse dans la mise en place de mécanismes de prestation des services qui tiennent compte de la situation unique du Nord de l'Ontario et à permettre l'accroissement de l'efficacité et de la respon-

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 2 juin 1998

sabilité en ce qui concerne la prestation des services à l'échelle régionale.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): At this point we are on questions and comments on Mr Spina's speech. Questions and comments? The Chair recognizes the member for Algoma.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Poppycock.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Does the member for Brampton North wish to respond?

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): I disagree with the honourable member for Algoma.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I am glad to have an opportunity to speak tonight on Bill 12 or, as it is euphemistically called, the Northern Services Improvement Act, which I think is unfortunately quite typical of this government in terms of how they frame their legislation and how they try and spin it out to the public, because indeed there is nothing about this legislation that improves services for northerners in any way at all.

It's just another one in a long list of bills and legislation put forward by this government that does nothing but hurt northern Ontario. It's probably important to discuss the process that's gotten us to this point and to explain why certainly we as a Liberal caucus feel very strongly that it appears that as a result of the government's action and as a result of the government's behaviour in terms of their downloading exercise and the position they have left municipalities in, this legislation may be something municipalities actually will need in order to carry on.

That being the case, that doesn't mean we find this legislation anything other than offensive and a lot of waste. It also doesn't mean that we don't think it needs to have much more debate. We believe very strongly that as a result of some of the flaws in this legislation — and, again, this is affected by the process — what we need are public hearings across the north to help make some amendments that will make this more palatable and will answer some of the questions that the municipalities in my district are asking me to try and find the answers to.

In speaking to the government directly on this, if they are willing tonight to stand up, if the parliamentary assistant is able to do so, and say that public hearings will be the result of what comes out of tonight, I think then we can probably talk about moving things forward. But that not being the case, there's an awful lot of problems with this legislation that require us to carry on this debate.

Let me carry on with process to a short extent. The bill was first brought forward — actually, I think it was Bill

174 — in December 1997. Quite frankly, it only came forward at that time because of some prodding by those of us in the Liberal caucus saying, "You're meeting with all the municipalities, you're having discussions, you're forcing this upon them, but you're not even allowing them to have a look at what's going to be in there."

The government responded in an interesting manner. They brought the legislation forward, but then the House prorogued, so nothing took place other than introduction of the bill.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): They didn't carry it forward.

Mr Gravelle: They didn't care before. So it was really pretty interesting.

But what they did say was that there was going to be, in the winter break, in the break between the sessions, public consultation. There was going to be consultation with municipalities. They were going to go out there in some kind of formal way and meet with the communities.

That would have been a good thing if it had happened, but again I've had an opportunity to talk to a number of the municipalities in my district, and I know my colleagues have had the same opportunity to do that, and indeed that consultation did not take place.

In fact, what happened was that we come forward to the session here in April, May and June, and Bill 12 comes forward and the government puts forward the position that this is a new and improved piece of legislation and they insist that we are now holding it up when in fact what we want to do is work forward to make sure this is a piece of legislation that actually works.

We don't like the process by which we got here. We don't like the downloading that has been the reason for which this has been put forward. We recognize that municipalities are in a tough spot, but we are prepared to stand here and to help improve this piece of legislation. We are prepared to debate it and to bring some suggestions forward, but most significantly we are prepared to move forward if the government will simply acknowledge and agree to public hearings perhaps over the summer recess. It would be an excellent way for the government to make sure we get a piece of legislation — because otherwise what we have here is a piece of legislation that leaves the municipalities in an extremely difficult position. There's a lot of confusion about what's actually in the legislation.

Mr Bartolucci: No one knows.

Mr Gravelle: No one knows. In fact it's almost impossible to decipher that.

Mr Bartolucci: Municipalities are begging to have that information.

Mr Gravelle: Exactly. The fact is that this is something that we think can be the solution to this dilemma. Certainly the government can stand there and say, "You're holding up this fine piece of legislation." It's not a fine piece of legislation.

Mr Bartolucci: Poppycock.

Mr Gravelle: It is poppycock. The fact is that we are offering an opportunity for the government to have those

public hearings. If they can do that, then let's move forward. Let's get through second reading. We're quite prepared to do that and then we can move on and make this a better piece of legislation.

But I think also you can't carry on with this discussion without recognizing that indeed the beginning of this whole process was the downloading, the megaweek of January 1997, I guess about 18 months ago, when this government decided what they were going to do was shift all the responsibilities and very clearly download all kinds of responsibilities to municipalities.

Of course they were going to talk about it being revenue-neutral. We know that is not the case. I think the government has acknowledged that it's not the case. They are out there trying to find various transition funds and special assistance funds which in the short term will at least perhaps keep things quieter for them, but the fact is that everybody recognizes that this process is not revenue-neutral and is not in any way fair at all. But it's being forced upon the communities, and in northern Ontario we are disproportionately affected by this downloading. It's extremely damaging, let alone the fact that so much of what has been downloaded is absolutely inappropriate for the provincial government to be downloading.

Mr Bartolucci: Almost like we're the forgotten people.

Mr Gravelle: We really are almost like the forgotten people. There's example upon example of legislation, of behaviour by this government, that shows they really are not sensitive to the needs of the north at all; in fact, they don't care much about the north. They simply will put out legislation that they think has no impact.

The truth is, when you get right down to it — I recall a casual discussion that I had with a member of the government really very early in the term, back in the fall of 1995. I recall this particular member — and I won't name this member because it was a casual conversation, but the suggestion was made that, "May the fittest survive." That was the summary of it, that there should be no particular help for communities unless they can absolutely make it on their own. It betrayed a real sort of attitude not just about the north but about many parts of this province, about some of the rural communities, about many parts of this province that have contributed so incredibly to the growth of our province, yet are being treated I think in an extraordinarily difficult manner.

Going back to the downloading aspect, because I think that's worth carrying on about, we've all fought, I'd like to think, in a valiant way, if I may say so, without any intention of back-slapping, but strongly to fight the issues such as public health.

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I think it's recognized just about everywhere that public health, for very, very good reasons, should be a provincial responsibility. You honestly can't legislate the boundaries of contagious diseases. You can't legislate those areas. To decide that public health can be brought into municipal boundaries only is clearly incorrect; it's certainly dangerous and it makes all of us concerned.

There have been, as I say, extraordinary efforts to get the government to listen to this. Once again, the pressure has had some impact, as they've decided there are some programs that they agree should be funded. But the fact is, they literally are, as always, so incredibly stubborn about it all. The bottom line is that the government still doesn't listen. They're trying very hard to give the impression of being a different kind of government now. They're being a kinder, gentler government, but the fact is, they still don't listen. This piece of legislation, may I say, is a perfectly good example of that.

Here we have a piece of legislation, again, that's essentially forced upon the municipalities and forced upon this Legislature because of the decisions that were made to download that have left our municipalities in a very difficult situation. We're left with that. It has been forced upon us. The legislation comes forward for the second time, supposedly an improved piece of legislation, clearly with very few changes from the original but, most significantly, with flaws that are quite extraordinary.

The government says, "We've got to get this legislation through quickly because the municipalities need it." The municipalities are concerned and nervous. They've made it very clear that if this is what's going to happen, they recognize that they need to have this kind of legislation, but their greatest concern is that there are so many questions that have been left unanswered, so many areas that are not the least bit clear, that in its present form this legislation cannot go forward unless there are some significant changes.

Mr Bartolucci: Municipalities don't know what the legislation is.

Mr Gravelle: My colleague from Sudbury said it: Municipalities don't even know what's in the legislation, what it really means. That is a pretty extraordinary thing to say when you've got legislation that you cannot even clearly understand.

I had the opportunity of talking to Ron Nelson, the past president of the Thunder Bay District Municipal League, the other night and he went through the legislation with me as well and actually, to back up my colleague's point, said, "This is what it says but we're not sure what it means." These are people who have followed this closely. Mr Nelson was involved with the preconsultation and was very concerned about it and on behalf of the league was fighting to make sure that if we're in this position, at least let's make it something that will work, based on the pressures that we're under.

Certainly, again, let's come back to this consistently. We are prepared to move forward. We think this legislation can be improved. We think the only way it can be improved is through public hearings. We are more than prepared to go forward tonight if the government will agree to have public hearings and if, therefore, the government will agree to listen.

Of course, part of the problem with public hearings, at least the history that we've seen with this government over the last couple of years, is that there certainly have been a significant number of public hearings held across the

province, many of them that have been forced upon the government. Bill 26 is a perfectly good example. We had to actually sleep over —

Mr Bartolucci: They didn't listen.

Mr Gravelle: That's the problem. We forced public hearings upon this government, but unfortunately they didn't listen. They didn't make significant changes at all to it. So on the one hand, we're calling for public hearings, I guess in the hope that indeed these public hearings, if they take place, will be listened to by the government. The history isn't good but we're still prepared to say —

Mr Bartolucci: The new Mike.

Mr Gravelle: This is the new Mike. This is the new pre-election Mike. But let's hope that if these public hearings take place, they'll listen to the municipalities and listen to the decisions and recommendations that they make because, ultimately, when you look at what this legislation implies and when you look at what the area service boards ultimately leave the boards responsible for, it makes one again think to some degree about the hidden agenda of the government.

If all of this is implemented, the aspects of the piece of legislation or the aspects of the bill which will affect the boards are child care, welfare, public health, social housing, land ambulance and homes for the aged. These are the areas under which the area service boards could be responsible. But what could be included in that, what could be added on to that, is economic development, airports, land use planning, waste management, police, fire or roads. You add all that together and what do you see?

Mr Bartolucci: More government.

Mr Gravelle: You see an upper tier of government, something that for a government that believes in being more efficient and operating well doesn't make any sense.

Also, more significantly, what you see is a situation where the municipalities themselves may no longer be relevant bodies as they are meant to be. What are we talking about? Are we talking about a government that's going to try and force a Greenstone again upon communities? Make it difficult for them to function in terms of their municipal responsibilities? If that's what they want to do, why don't they say so? That brings me back to the conversation that I had a couple of years ago with the Conservative —

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): Tell me more about Greenstone.

Mr Gravelle: Greenstone is an interesting story, and if I had more time, I would tell you more about it. It is an extraordinary story. You have a restructuring commissioner come in and tell the area what they're going to do, have them resist it, have them go to court and have it thrown out of court because Justice O'Driscoll, I think it was — I hope I've got that right. Justice O'Driscoll basically says, "The reason I'm not going to allow this to happen is because clearly there is —" Do I need to be really careful here, folks? The reason that it needs to be thrown out is because ultimately the decision that was made by the commissioner is in line with the government's wishes.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): It violated the Municipal Act.

Mr Gravelle: It violated the Municipal Act. It's quite extraordinary. Can you imagine that happening?

Mr Bartolucci: Big Brother.

Mr Gravelle: "Big Brother," I hear over to my left here. It's quite true. You've got a government that continually puts people in that position. There are so many other aspects of the legislation that give you great concern, and again give you a reason why public hearings are simply a good idea.

The government tries to spin the message that this is something that will be decided by the communities themselves. They will get to choose whether or not to have the area services boards. Of course, if they don't, they will have DSSABs, district social services administration boards, foisted upon them. This is an interesting battle, by the way. It's like between Bill 12 and Bill 152, kind of duelling legislation.

Mr Bartolucci: Between ministries.

Mr Gravelle: Between ministries — exactly — as to who is going to have control. For example, if one or two municipalities, or 11 municipalities, decide that they want to form an area services board that includes, say, the city of Thunder Bay, what would that mean? The legislation seems to imply that the majority of the municipalities can make the decision and things will simply happen. There are all kinds of implications.

Who decides local consensus? What is local consensus? I find that an interesting one. Apparently it will at this stage, at least as the act seems to read now, be determined by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. He will decide whether local consensus is there or not. That is obviously one that we would like to have defined. Mind you, we apparently shouldn't be concerned because they will spell that out in the regulations, after the legislation is put forward.

Mr Conway: — losing it.

Mr Gravelle: Thank you very much, member for Renfrew North, for that helpful comment.

It will be decided in regulations. That's a concern. Why can't we define what local consensus is? Perhaps, with public hearings, we could do that. Well, we could do that with public hearings. Again, the offer is out there to the members of the government, to the minister, to the parliamentary assistants.

Mr Bartolucci: You know the third party will support government hearings.

Mr Gravelle: I'm sure the third party will support government hearings; I've no doubt about that. The fact is that these public hearings can make a huge difference in a bill that is going to have enormous implications on the municipalities in northern Ontario. For the government to not be able to cooperate in this manner is pretty darn strange, if indeed they want to be believed for a second that they are going to listen and that they can be trusted. Bring the hearings forward. Let's listen to them. This can be an improved piece of legislation; there's no question about it.

There are so many other implications in this legislation. They are confusing, but the reality of the area services board will ultimately be the opportunity to include the unorganized territories in northern Ontario and the opportunity to have them as part of the operation. The concerns that are expressed by some of the municipalities that are involved is that when the ASBs are put in place they actually won't have the power of the Municipal Act to make decisions. There is the possibility, obviously, that if certain people were not able or organizations did not want to make the payments that were required, there's nothing there in law to require the payment. So that's a concern to us. These things need to be spelled out. There's no question that there are loopholes and problems with all kinds of parts of this legislation that have everybody concerned.

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Mr Bartolucci: It's poorly drafted.

Mr Gravelle: It's extremely poorly drafted, but maybe it can be fixed. Municipalities are being forced to work with the government as a result of the downloading that has taken place, the fact that they're put in that position. We've got a recommendation essentially of a new upper tier of government. We've got a piece of legislation that has the municipalities truly scratching their heads, saying: "How is this really going to work? Here are some of the problems that we've identified."

What we're asking for in essence is some opportunity to fix it. It can be only fixed I think by allowing public hearings. I don't think that's an exceptional thing to be asking. It only makes sense that the minister should allow that to happen so we can go forward and listen to the concerns and listen to some of the changes.

I've spoken to my municipal leaders on many occasions. You have to be concerned too when you realize that even at a session like NOMA, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, or FONOM, this legislation is not discussed in almost any way at all. I think there was one —

Mr Bartolucci: Presentation only.

Mr Gravelle: Presentation only. Certainly there was no real opportunity, no real sense of saying: "Listen, this is the legislation. It's not perfect. Let's have a few changes. Can you give us some ideas for some changes?" That opportunity wasn't presented.

We had a couple of ministers up there. We had the Minister of Northern Development and Mines up in Thunder Bay. I don't know if he was at FONOM but he was there in Thunder Bay for NOMA.

Mr Conway: What does Michael Power think of it all?

Mr Gravelle: We have to find out, the member for Renfrew North asks, and I will try and check that out. Michael Power, the mayor of Geraldton, has concerns as well about this, as he well should.

Mr Bartolucci: And FONOM.

Mr Gravelle: Exactly. FONOM's got concerns as well. It's very simple. There are real concerns with this piece of legislation. There is no question about it that it's a very flawed bill.

We are prepared to go forward, to be positive, to try and help you make it better. We are prepared to let things happen tonight. All we're asking is for the government to accept the fact that public hearings are the answer at this stage to improve this piece of legislation. I don't think it's too much to ask. I'm asking on behalf of the Thunder Bay District Municipal League and others.

Interjection.

Mr Gravelle: We want it speeded up; exactly. Let's give us a chance to do it. Let's have public hearings.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Comments and questions?

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I listened very attentively to the member for Port Arthur on the fact that Bill 12 is an old bill that was carried forward from the last session, Bill 174. Sure, they made a couple of additions to it, but it's a bill that is flawed and it's in line with Bill 26, the bully bill, that was brought in to amalgamate some of the areas of southern Ontario, and Bill 12 is another bill that eventually will amalgamate northern Ontario.

It's going to be devastating for some of the unorganized areas when you look at all of the services that these areas do not necessarily have to provide now that they're going to have to provide in this bill. Look at the property taxes. Where are the property taxes going to go? People who lived in these outlying areas weren't expected to cover the maintenance of airports, their own roads and bridges. In a lot of these areas services were covered by general taxation — OPP protection for these areas. All of these services were covered by general taxation because of such a low population in that area.

Last fall the government didn't think it was important to carry that bill over into this session. They let it drop and now they're saying they want Bill 12 by the end of June. Personally, I don't think it's that critical, because it's going to give extreme powers to the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Municipal Affairs when it comes to amalgamating.

In southern Ontario they say they want to eliminate government, they want to streamline, they want to have one government. In northern Ontario now they're going to go to regional government or county government in addition to the governments that they have. So I —

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Comments and questions.

Mr Spina: I'm amazed at the amount of drivel that is coming from these two opposition benches. It's interesting.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Poppycock.

Mr Spina: Yes, the member for Algoma did refer to it as that: poppycock.

Mr Wildman: No, I was referring to your comments.

Mr Spina: In any case, the member for Thunder Bay — Port Arthur, sorry.

Yes, we must distinguish between the two amalgamated municipalities. The member for Port Arthur said that maybe it could be fixed. If you look at the way bills are

fixed by the Liberals, I can understand that this thing will probably be far worse.

The member for Cochrane North refers to this as a bully bill. Well, hello, folks. Welcome to the planet earth. You see, this bill is enabling legislation. It is not being imposed.

With respect to the issue of consultation, since this bill was originally introduced on December 15, 1997, there was a series of nine meetings to discuss the consolidated service delivery. About 550 northern community leaders attended these sessions. ASBs appeared to be the governance structure of choice at most of these sessions. Furthermore, 24 northern communities have written to the Minister of Northern Development in support of this particular bill.

Ladies and gentlemen, this bill is not something this government is creating because it's something that we wanted to do; it was in response to the request of the districts of northern Ontario. In fact, it is modelled after the models from Kenora, Rainy River and Timiskaming.

The reality is that this is enabling legislation. They can choose to adopt it or not.

Mr Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for Port Arthur for his very good presentation. I think he outlines for the people of Ontario what the biggest concern is for northerners about this legislation, and that is that they haven't been consulted. Regardless of what the member for Brampton North is saying, there hasn't been an opportunity for this bill to go on the road to get input from those people who are going to be directly affected by this legislation. If there's a weakness in this legislation, it's that.

The government will spin that the Liberals are trying to slow down the legislation. Let me tell you, I want the government to go all across northern Ontario and tell everybody in northern Ontario that the Liberals want input from northerners and that's the reason we want this to go to committee. I don't want to slow down the process; we want to make the process go quickly, we want the process to mean something, and finally and ultimately, we want the bill to have meaning to the north. As it's written right now there is not the northern input that's necessary to ensure that all the problems that we have in northern Ontario are being addressed by this bill.

I would say to the government members, and in particular the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, had they done their homework when they first implemented this bill before Christmas under the guise of 174 and not let it die on the order paper, then this bill could have gone to committee, we could have had the input, and then this particular piece of legislation may already have been enacted.

I would suggest to you and to the people of northern Ontario and to the people of Ontario that we northerners will stand up for the north. We northerners will say we want northern input on these types of bills. We're going to say northerners are important and we're tired of being the forgotten people of Ontario.

Mr Wildman: Contrary to the learned comments of the member for Brampton North, I don't consider the

comments made by my friend from Port Arthur drivel — slightly better than that at least.

I would say that this is in fact, as the member said, an attempt by this government to present a Hobson's choice to the communities in northern Ontario: You either choose to form area services boards or, under Bill 152, district services boards under the Ministry of Community and Social Services, will be imposed upon the communities. If you don't like district services boards being imposed, then you have the choice of forming area services boards.

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The impression is presented that these area service boards will be designed by the communities themselves, but that ignores the fact that the proposal for the formation of an area services board will go to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines determines whether there's a consensus and then determines whether the area service board will be formed. He may decide not to. If he decides to form an area service board, there is no guarantee whatsoever in this legislation that the area service board will be formed in the way proposed by the local community. The discretion is completely in the hands of the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Frankly, Leo Bernier used to see himself as an emperor of the north; this is an attempt to make Hodgson that.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Port Arthur has two minutes to respond.

Mr Gravelle: I certainly would like to thank the members for Cochrane North, Brampton North and Algoma for their comments, and particularly my colleague from Sudbury also for his strong support during my presentation itself. I thank them all very much.

Mr Wildman: Interjections are always out of order.

Mr Gravelle: Well, he was really helping me out a lot.

We must remember something: Absolutely none of this is necessary, were it not for the downloading, the process that took place a year and a half ago, the decision by this government to download the incredible amount of services on to the municipalities. That's really important to remember. The people of Ontario do remember that and will remember that. This piece of legislation only becomes necessary, if it is so, because of that reality.

It's significant that the member for Brampton North actually didn't respond to my call asking for public hearings. He didn't say no, interestingly enough, and I'll take that as a positive. He may have called it drivel; that's fair game — I appreciate the member for Algoma saying it was something above that. The fact is, he didn't say they won't have public hearings because I think he recognizes that this bill can be improved by public hearings.

It needs to be said too that ultimately all we are attempting to do by making this effort to move into that sphere, into public hearings, is to speed up the process. Unless this does happen, the process won't go forward, perhaps.

We want this bill to go forward, but it's got to go forward appropriately so that there are changes made that make this palatable, that make this something the municipi-

palities can deal with. It isn't a great deal to ask. It's becoming more and more apparent, as again was noted earlier, that it's going to be either "my way or the highway." It's going to be Bill 152, DSSABs, or Bill 12, area service boards. Let's leave the municipalities in a position where they can make decisions that are going to be right. That can only happen if they get an opportunity to make improvements to this bill by going across the north in public hearings, something this government can do, should do and we once again call on them to do, because it will speed up the process enormously.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Len Wood: When I look at Bill 12, it's very similar to a number of other bills. At 7 o'clock at night when I was working in the paper mill, I used to get a call from the foreman or the head tradesman and he'd say: "We've got a crisis. We're going to have to work overtime. We're going to have to work probably into the night."

Here we are in the Legislature, when the Legislature normally, under any previous government, with the exception of just prior to Christmas or in June would work to clean up legislation — this government has decided that they're going to work Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday nights until 9:30 —

Mr Wildman: And call it a different day.

Mr Len Wood: — and call it a different day, try to get two days into one. As I said, having spent 20 years working as a millwright in the paper mill in Kapuskasing, when we used work at this time of night it was under a crisis basis, to get the paper machines up and running. That's the way I'm looking at not only Bill 12 but a number of other bills that are being debated.

I can go back to Bill 26, that forced amalgamation and created the megacity and eliminated the two-tier government in southern Ontario. Yet this particular bill, if it's passed the way it is, gives the minister the signing authority to do almost anything he wants with unorganized areas and municipalities in northern Ontario. It eventually could create a two-tier government, a county government or regional government as well as the municipalities. That would be a sad thing, if that does happen.

We look back at — I don't remember exactly what the number of the bill was, but it was a bill to eliminate members of provincial Parliament in northern Ontario. The federal government decided there were too many federal members in northern Ontario. They eliminated one. Then lo and behold, Mike Harris came along and said, "I'm going to eliminate five in northern Ontario." We're going to end up in the next Legislature with five less politicians.

If you look through Bill 12, it says that northern Ontario should be split up into three districts or three regions for all of northern Ontario as far as taxation is concerned and then split up into 10 districts — Algoma, Cochrane, Kenora, Manitoulin, Nipissing, Parry Sound, Rainy River, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Timiskaming — to form area service boards. We wonder if it's really necessary. We know it's being done because they want the area service boards to deliver workfare — some people call it social assistance but now it has turned into workfare — child

care, public health, social housing, land ambulance services and homes for the aged. They're also leaving the options open that there can be additional services, and I want the listening public to know some of the services they're talking about.

"If required to do so by an order, a board shall provide or ensure the provision of one or more of the following services to the extent that a service delivery agency is required by law to provide them or ensure their provision:

- "1. Services promoting economic development.
- "2. Airport service.
- "3. Land use planning under the Planning Act.
- "4. Administrative functions and prosecutions...
- "5. Waste management.
- "6. Police services under the Police Services Act."

I want to talk briefly about just this last one alone because it is creating quite a concern. Some people in north-eastern and northwestern Ontario have been told: "We're changing the rules. We know that previous governments said that if your municipality was less than 10,000 in population general taxes will pay for the OPP policing." Lo and behold, the Solicitor General decided that everybody should pay for it. People are going to be getting bills anywhere from \$300, and it could go as high as \$700 when you spread the cost of OPP policing throughout northern Ontario. That's tragic.

If you go one step further, they're saying that one of the other options is roads and bridges. Number 9 is "Any other service designated by the minister." They're leaving the door wide open to download and dump a lot of services that the provincial government was delivering in the past on to these unorganized areas and municipalities throughout northern Ontario.

We know they decided to increase taxes on everybody who owns a vehicle in northern Ontario. It's not written into this particular bill, but there was a tax grab. Anybody who owns a vehicle in northern Ontario is going to have to pay \$37 into the treasury. They're taking money out of northern Ontario; that's only one example that I'm giving. At the same time, they wish to download services on to the districts in northern Ontario and drive up property taxes.

We know that some large municipalities in northern Ontario are having public meetings. I believe there's a public meeting taking place at the end of this week where the option will be put out. The mayor and town councillors are saying: "We want the public to make a decision on this. With all the downloading and dumping that has taken place by the Mike Harris government, now you have the choice: We increase taxes by 8% or we eliminate a lot of the services out there and lay off hundreds of people, and the services that you have been getting are not going to be there." It's sad.

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I know, for example, the main highway in Kapuskasing is the only road going through Kapuskasing from east to west — or west to east — to get to Thunder Bay if you're travelling in that area. The cost of 10 kilometres of this has been assigned to Kapuskasing. There's bridges and culverts and snow removal that has to be done on this. The

town has appealed that decision but the government is saying: "No. As far as we're concerned, the town is going to have to look after this service." Yet there are probably 10,000 transports a day passing through that area on the way from Thunder Bay to Toronto and vice-versa.

Another example of downloading services: I talked to the reeve of Mattice, Paul Zorzetto, a couple of times. With the rebuilding of the Ontario Northland Railroad, there's a number of railroad crossings, six or eight, in Mattice-Val Côté where you need crossings to get on concession roads. Two of the crossings are paved. Now Ontario Northland wants to put in a new track so they can have the train going faster on a new mine that's opening up in Opatatika. They're going to put in new tracks from Opatatika to Hearst in order to be able to ship the raw product out for refining. It's a phosphate mine.

But lo and behold, after they've torn out these crossings, they're saying, "We're going to bill each municipality up to \$6,000 to rebuild these crossings." Some of them are expensive because they're paved crossings. Why should a municipality have to absorb the capital costs of Ontario Northland rebuilding their lines? Talking to the people in Mattice, they're saying they don't expect there will be a single job created in that community as a result of the new mine that's opening up in Opatatika. Unless the government backs off on that decision, they're going to have to raise taxes in order to find the \$50,000 they're going to need to maintain these crossings.

We know that Bill 12 is in different stages. They're saying they want to do the actual value assessment throughout northern Ontario but they don't have time and they won't have it completed until the year 2000, so there's going to be different models of taxation until the actual value assessment is completed right throughout northern Ontario.

There is a concern. Right now all municipal leaders are elected. Every three years they're up for election. In this particular legislation, it spells out very clearly that the first term of the area service boards, until the next election, are going to be appointed. Representatives from unorganized areas are to be appointed. The municipalities that have councils right now would appoint their own people to the areas as well.

There's an interesting part there: The names of proposed members from the unorganized areas will be included in the proposal to the minister; however, the minister decides on the appointments. You might appoint two or three or half a dozen people from different areas within Cochrane North — and there are a lot of unorganized areas there right now — and the minister might reject them all because of their political background or whatever and say that no, he's going to appoint his own people. But they want the names submitted.

Is the legislation heading in the right direction? I think this is going to mean extra cost for all of the residents of northern Ontario the minute you bring in legislation of this kind. The government says they need it. They've made a mess of various things over the last three years. They needed Bill 174, but then they didn't carry it over into this

year. They dropped it. They brought forward Bill 12. They made a couple of amendments to sections 53 and 54, but not enough that it shouldn't go right across the province to get feedback from the different areas.

As I said during the two-minute comments on the comments from the member for Port Arthur, Bill 12, depending on which minister is in charge and what kind of authority he wants to reign over northern Ontario to be king of the north, could turn into a giant amalgamation bill, the same as Bill 26, with the dumping and downloading and the other megacity legislation they brought in.

They've asked municipalities to merge and amalgamate. I remember I was at one meeting when Minister Leach was in northwestern Ontario saying that the communities should amalgamate, or they could appoint somebody to bring in a recommendation and then he would have the final say on amalgamating. They tried this in the Geraldton-Longlac area and the two groups got together, the aboriginal group and Trans-Canada Pipeline, and challenged that decision in court and it was found to be, I understand, in violation of the Municipal Act. Now they have to hold further elections to undo the amalgamation that was basically forced by this present Conservative government.

There were a lot of meetings that took place in the Hearst, Mattice, Val Côté, Jogues and Coppel region and they were very close to an agreement. They submitted a proposal to the Minister of Municipal Affairs last fall and the minister dragged his feet. Then they started asking more questions and getting more information and finding out, "Whoa, this is going to be a costly affair." They spent close to \$50,000 doing their study and they found out that taxes are going to double and sometimes triple. Because of the dumping and downloading, all the services that used to come out of general taxation before were now being downloaded on to them.

The decision was made, "We'll wait to see what happens with the megacity." As a result of the concerns and all the publicity and media that was coming out of the megacity, the mayor and 57 councillors not being able to make very many decisions because of the large size and other dumping and downloading that had taken place on the Toronto megacity, Hearst, Mattice, Val Côté, Jogues and Coppel, all the unorganized areas, decided: "Whoa, we're going to back off on this. If the minister wants amalgamation he's going to have to appoint somebody and force amalgamation."

But it could have been worked out in a very voluntary, friendly manner had there been cooperation, or if the minister had sent somebody up there and said, "No, your taxes are not going to have to go up as a result of amalgamation." That didn't happen, so we're back to square one.

As the member for Algoma mentioned earlier, there's a catch-22 situation here. You have Bill 152, which sets up delivering welfare, I guess, or workfare and social assistance. If they don't catch you under Bill 152, now they've got Bill 12 which was brought forward — it used to be called Bill 174 — so the people in northern Ontario are going to be wrapped in under one or the other.

Public hearings — whether there can be any amendments that will make this bill make sense for most of the people in northern Ontario, I doubt it. From my experience on committee — I sat on a number of different committees with this government — they have a mindset. They say, "The legislation was written, it was drafted and it's going to be implemented." This is the route they have taken on almost every piece of legislation for which I've sat on committee. They've refused to listen to amendments; they have voted them down.

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There's no problem in having public hearings. If it turns into the Lands for Strife situation the Minister of Natural Resources has created in northern Ontario — we had a Minister of Education who said: "Well, I've got a problem. I've got to take \$1 billion out of education. The education system is pretty good, so we've got to create a crisis in education in order to be able to take that money out." That's basically what happened. Now we've got the same minister who was moved over to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Prior to him getting that appointment, Premier Harris and Chris Hodgson decided: "We have a plan here. We're going to complete Ontario's systems of parks and protected areas and we're going to throw thousands of people in northern Ontario out of work." The commentators and the people who are writing opinions are saying that there's been a crisis created. They don't call it Lands for Life; they call it Lands for Strife. The Minister of Natural Resources is here and he's laughing at that, but it's a situation that could happen with Bill 12.

I was at meetings in Smooth Rock Falls, Hearst, Constance Lake. In Constance Lake you've got a population of about 1,000 people, and they had over 800 people who showed up to get their comments on the record. In Smooth Rock Falls, pretty well everybody in the town showed up. People drove in from Cochrane, Hearst, all over the place. They're saying: "What is going on here? What is happening? Why are we creating a crisis like this within northern Ontario?"

Bumper stickers are coming out now. I was travelling down the 400 the other day and I saw a bumper sticker out there. Some of the people in southern Ontario's big cities are saying, "You're cutting too many trees and you're not doing a proper reforestation." I think a proper reforestation is being done. But they've got bumper stickers out there saying, "If you don't want the trees cut, try wiping yourself with plastic." These bumper stickers are coming up all over the place. I'm sure that somebody's probably going to put one on John Snobelen's bumper one of these days. That'll help to send the message out there.

But I'm pleased that I was able to make some comments on this particular bill because it is of concern to all of the people in northern Ontario. There has to be some change. Northern Ontario has to be recognized, not just taking our wealth out of northern Ontario and giving us nothing in return. This is what the feeling is not only with this bill, but a number of other bills that have been debated in this House over the last while.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I find it a privilege to rise and speak on this bill. Inasmuch as I have an interest in MNR and Lands for Life issues, I will stick with Bill 12, the Northern Services Improvement Act.

I think it's necessary to bring out a couple of key points again. This is enabling legislation. That's what we are dealing with: giving enabling legislation.

One of the other things is that during my time in transportation, we met with a number of northern communities, as well as with the Ontario Good Roads Association. During that time, there was a lot of concern brought forward from communities in the north specifically about unorganized territories using the services of organized territories. It was a huge concern of theirs that these individuals in the unorganized areas were coming in and essentially using all those services without paying anything for them. What this legislation does is give those organized areas the ability to try and deal with that situation.

Mr Wildman: Get money from the unorganized.

Mr Ouellette: As the member for Algoma says, "Get money from the unorganized." The case is that services are being utilized in communities and not being paid for. How do they deal with that? It was a strong issue at that time. We are bringing legislation forward that will address that.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I'd like to applaud the speech tonight from the member for Cochrane North. I think he had it right on when he said this is basically just another bully bill. While the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development will say that this piece of legislation is discretionary in that the municipalities can choose whether they wish to invoke this law or not, the cause of all of this, of course, is the tremendous downloading that the Harris government has brought on to all our municipalities across Ontario.

This has hit our northern municipalities especially hard. Quite frankly, I think we should have, and never had, the opportunity to really debate whether all this amalgamating of municipalities and downloading was necessary. It's certainly necessary for the Harris government agenda, which is basically to eliminate most of the municipalities in this province, to bring them to something like about 50 so that in a potential next term of the Harris government — that's what they are hoping to get — they would be able to continue the downloading exercise to 50 to 60 municipalities in Ontario, thinking that there would be less resistance from the people of Ontario to downloading to a public sector entity such as a municipality rather than the private sector.

Of course, to continue that downloading, you're going to have to have municipalities of the size and with the expertise to have the ability to carry out all the functions that this government wants to download. I think that's what the agenda is, and they're starting here.

Basically what we're talking about here, this forcing of the area service boards, is really the first step in forcing all those area service boards to be regional governments

some day across northern Ontario. That's what's coming, and it's against the will of the people of the north.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I just want to thank the member for Cochrane North for his usual very sobering and thoughtful presentation in this place. The member for Cochrane North, being from the small town of Kapuskasing, a very wonderful little community in northern Ontario, is one of the few people in this place — there are a number of us in the New Democratic Party caucus and a number in the Liberal caucus who actually live and work in northern Ontario, who understand the needs and the aspirations of northern Ontario, who live and feel first hand the devastating damage that this government has caused to the lives of almost everybody who calls northern Ontario home: the communities, the people, the families, people in their neighbourhood.

He knows that this piece of legislation, no matter how you package it and no matter how you present it, no matter what names you use, such as "enabling legislation," all boils down to one thing, and that's taking away: taking services away, taking opportunity away, taking money out of the north.

This is an attempt to have more people, more communities, contribute to the cost of services that were traditionally over the years paid for by the provincial, and I dare say federal governments in many instances, and that are now going to be squarely on the shoulders of rate-payers in all of the medium-sized — we don't have any really big communities in northern Ontario. We have some medium-sized and small and then very small communities in northern Ontario. They will all carry now the same cost of social services that a community like Toronto or Ottawa will and that the province previously used to pay for.

The member for Cochrane North knows of what he speaks, as I said before, because of the fact that he has spent so much time in his community listening to the people he serves.

Mr Spina: Having been born and raised in northern Ontario and lived there until I was 24 or 25 and still having my family and relatives up there, I hear the same arguments today that I heard 30 years ago when I was 22 or 23. I'm amazed that no provincial government, no federal government, no municipal government has ever been in a position to try to develop some sense of independence for the north and get it off the constant reliance on the provincial and federal governments for financial support.

This is an opportunity for them to get the self-reliance they've always wanted. Frankly, I take umbrage with the comment by the member for Sault Ste Marie in saying that this is a way of sucking money out of northern Ontario, as if it was coming to Queen's Park. That's not the case at all.

Mr Wildman: What about the downloading?

Mr Spina: They talk about downloading. This is restructuring of government, and this government is not in the game to put municipalities out of business. That's why we created the mitigating funds for particularly northern municipalities.

I'll close with a quote from the Sault Star: "Area service boards are an idea that has existed in some shape or form for a couple of decades. As the cost of doing government business soars and the population of many northern centres remains static or even declines, ASBs have been seen as a way to rationalize services over a larger, more sparsely populated area." End of quote, Sault Star, August —

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. The member for Cochrane North has two minutes to respond.

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Mr Len Wood: I want to thank the member for Timiskaming and the member for Sault Ste Marie for the comments they made.

The member for Oshawa and the member for Brampton North have both reconfirmed what my suspicion was: that the Conservative government has decided that the people out there in these unorganized areas are living out there and they're not paying enough taxes —

Mr Martin: Freeloaders.

Mr Len Wood: They're freeloaders out there and they are using the services of the municipalities, so we're going to hit them real hard. We're going to drive their taxes right through the roof. This is the conclusion that I've come to in listening to the comments from the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and the comments from the member for Oshawa.

This is the fear that is out there, that the minority group is being dumped and downloaded all the services which usually come out of taxes at the provincial government level. Queen's Park looks after a lot of those services: plowing of some of the roads, the police services and libraries and one thing or another. Now all of this is being dumped on to them. It's a tax grab that Queen's Park is trying to take away from the unorganized areas and drive up their taxes so that they can give a tax break to the wealthiest people in this province at the same time as they're cutting all the operating budgets in the hospitals in northern Ontario. They're closing wings, closing floors. We're going to see schools closed in northern Ontario and southern Ontario.

It's a tax burden that they're putting on to these areas in northern Ontario, the unorganized areas, at the same time as they're giving the wealthy people in this province a break. As far as I'm concerned, it's Robin Hood in reverse. You're stealing from the poor to give to the rich. It's a continuation of what has been happening over the last three years, and I won't allow it to happen any more.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): As has been indicated by my colleagues, we certainly want this bill to go into committee. I wish to put on the record a great number of reasons as to why we want this bill to proceed into committee so that it can go throughout the north and we can listen to some of the concerns those organized municipalities have with this legislation, and concerns from the unorganized areas throughout northern Ontario as well.

I've certainly heard a good number of these concerns and, as has been indicated earlier, a good number of unanswered questions when it comes to Bill 12. We would certainly like to see it do a little travel, not travel here in Toronto but travel throughout northern Ontario. I think that's extremely important.

As we know, the bill was actually first introduced as Bill 174 on December 15, 1997. As the folks in the Legislature here know, it was tabled. We prorogued on December 18 and the bill went nowhere.

We were told that the PA to the Minister of Northern Development was to conduct extensive hearings, consultations, throughout northern Ontario on what at that time would have been Bill 174. In questioning the parliamentary assistant's staff, the member for Sudbury found out the other day that there were no consultations done during that period. There were no consultations done up until the time that we came back here; again something we're really very concerned about and quite a concrete reason why we would like to see this legislation go out to committee, to take the bill on the road.

Whenever I speak to a good number of municipal people in northern Ontario, people who have worked around government, many constituents, they often ask about the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. We very seldom see him up that way. Quite often a number of people see him as the phantom Minister of Northern Development. Even more recently we're getting more and more concerned that he's no longer acting on behalf of the northern residents.

As we know, he's become recently the Chair of Management Board. He's taken on those duties, and with those duties of course came the casinos. We've watched in the Legislature for the past couple of weeks how the minister's time is now taken up with what seems to be a scandal here around Queen's Park. We're again quite concerned about our advocate for the north, our Minister of Northern Development, and what he's doing in terms of representing our views as northerners at the cabinet table. As I indicated, he is now more interested in finding out who has his hand in the cookie jar when it comes to the issues around casinos. We're feeling really quite left out in terms of the north and what he is doing on behalf of us — another reason why I truly believe that we have to get this legislation out into a committee, a committee that will travel and listen to the real concerns of our northern constituents, because there are so many unanswered questions and so many concerns with this particular piece of legislation.

I indicated that we haven't seen the minister around northern Ontario for a good number of months. We haven't seen him, in terms of ministers of northern development from other governments who used to travel the north on a very regular basis. When I think of things that are happening in my riding, when I think of Sioux Lookout, the problem they had there with contaminated drinking water, you'd think the one person who would come to the table, to the forefront and help the citizens of Sioux Lookout and help me out with that problem, would have

been the Minister of Northern Development. He was nowhere to be found on that issue.

When I think of the strike in Balmertown right now at Gold Corp, we have a strike that's heading into the second year, the longest strike in northern Ontario. We have people who've been out on that picket line for two years coming up June 15. It'll be the second year. Again I ask, where is the Minister of Northern Development and Mines in helping those folks out? They certainly want to know where this minister is.

When we think of the diabetic education program at Lake of the Woods District Hospital, another issue where it goes on funding on an annual basis, at the end of every year — a couple of months ago — the funding comes to an end and it puts the whole program in chaos — the employees wondering what's going to happen; the people who use the program, the patients, again in total chaos. I wonder where the Minister of Northern Development is on an issue like that, one of health care that I certainly have wrestled with.

I've brought a couple of issues to the floor of the House here, one being the lack of psychiatric services in northern Ontario. These are northern constituents. The Minister of Northern Development represents those people at the cabinet table, and I quite often wonder where he is in terms of those psychiatric patients we are locking up in jails rather than putting in beds in hospitals.

Lands for Life crisis is another very important issue, one that is close to the hearts of many northerners — as was indicated earlier in the House, the Lands for Strife issue. We have a minister now who created a crisis in education and we're really quite concerned about that crisis being created in terms of the Minister of Natural Resources. We're asking again, where is our representation in terms of the Minister of Northern Development?

Some \$36.4 million was designated to help underserved areas throughout the north attract medical professionals into the region. As has been indicated over and over in this House, none of that money has gone anywhere. Money that was announced back in 1996 has not gone into any areas. Again I have to ask, where is our Minister of Northern Development when it comes to that?

Getting on with Bill 12 and what it's going to do, it's been indicated here that yes, municipalities are being asked to take on a lot more in terms of services to their constituents. We have a great amount of dumping that has gone on on behalf of this government.

The public health care issue is an issue that has just exploded in my riding, where it has pitted the public health services against all the municipalities. We have a public health unit getting into conflict with every single municipality throughout the entire region because the municipalities have now been told they must fund this service and they don't feel that it's their responsibility. As was indicated earlier, diseases don't remain in one area. Public health is certainly a provincial responsibility and has created with that downloading a great amount of strife between municipalities and the officials at the health unit.

We can talk about other downloading: the homes for the aged, again a provincial responsibility that has created a good amount of strife within the communities, dumped on to them; land ambulance, another service that has been dumped on to them. I was asked a number of weeks ago by a member here in the House what happens when that land ambulance has to go out into a provincial park, has to go out into an area outside of the boundary that was created for that particular service.

Police services: another one, where we're hearing up to \$700 per household in terms of the dumping of police services. Social services, social housing, welfare administration, just a number of things that have been dumped on to the local government and a reason that we now have Bill 12 to follow up on the dumping of these services into the communities of northern Ontario.

We've often heard that phrase, and I hear it almost on a daily basis when I go back home: "What about revenue-neutral? Where are these funds that are going to leave us as communities in northern Ontario on a revenue-neutral basis?" — again a good number of questions that I'm sure would be brought forth to the committee, allow them to bring these questions forth and possibly make some suggestions as well so that the legislation can come back here to Queen's Park with amendments. I'm sure there would be a great number of amendments suggested and hopefully some of them would be followed up once people in northern Ontario were heard.

The chamber of commerce is an organization that I hear from in northwestern Ontario on a fairly regular basis. I go back to their need to actually sit down with this Premier and this cabinet. They've been doing that for 50 years in Ontario. This is the first government that has refused to sit down to listen to the chamber of commerce, for over 50 years a tradition in this House, for 50 years on an annual basis, and this government just does not want to listen, so again a reason why we have to see this bill go into committee so it can travel up to northern Ontario and listen to the various concerns about it.

I've indicated that we have a minister who seems to be out of touch with the region, but I have to indicate as well that we had both the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the Minister of Municipal Affairs — even though the Minister of Municipal Affairs thought he was in North Bay, he was actually in Thunder Bay — there for the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association.

It was unbelievable what happened there. The two ministers, plus a number of parliamentary assistants, got up for about an hour and a half in what we in the north call a bearpit session where the ministers come in and listen to municipal representatives — mayors, reeves, councillors — and they have an exchange. Normally the exchange goes on for about two and a half hours and the mayors, reeves and councillors really look forward to these sessions because they're allowed to ask questions of the ministers and parliamentary assistants who are there.

Unfortunately, when they came to Thunder Bay, they took up most of the time. They took up about an hour and a half of the two-and-a-half-hour session telling the may-

ors and reeves all the great things the government was doing on their behalf — I tell you, not well received at all and a lot of very upset local politicians who had come to the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association to put their concerns forward. At the end of the hour the session was cut off. A good number of people still had a lot of questions and unfortunately it just did not work out — so again, not only this minister not listening but ministers wanting to come in, parliamentary assistants wanting to come in and dictate to the people of northern Ontario.

In terms of the dumping of provincial responsibilities on to the backs of municipalities, I'm still looking for one municipal leader — one reeve, mayor or councillor — in northern Ontario who has actually found out that this whole exercise is going to be revenue-neutral, because that's not what I'm hearing from them. The government likes to think that it's creating great headlines in northern Ontario, but all they have to do is take a look at the headlines created around the budget to find out that their massive dumping techniques and other things they've done to the constituents of northern Ontario are not creating great headlines.

Some municipalities are talking about tax increases of 25%, 50%, even some 100% increases in property taxes because of the massive dumping that I spoke about earlier. The finance critic from our party earlier on talked about the flawed property tax bill and the great concern and the great problems it was creating. I feel that if we get a committee that would look at all these things included in Bill 12 travelling throughout northern Ontario, there's a good possibility that they would hear these concerns and be aware of what is happening.

I've often heard that municipal politicians feel this may be a government that is afraid to come into northern Ontario to listen to concerns because they may get an earful. But I think that the folks throughout northern Ontario deserve the public hearings, deserve a place where they can bring their concerns in terms of Bill 12.

When we talk about area services boards and we take a look at the development of those and take a look at the legislation, we find out that it's an order of northern development and mines that will create these area services boards. There's been a lot of concern expressed about that as well. We have a minister who knows very little about what's happening up there, yet it's going to be an order of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines that will create these. As we've also indicated, they will only be considered for three years after the legislation is brought into effect, so again a good amount of concern that we possibly could have addressed earlier on if we had come back as the Legislature schedule suggests. We normally come back in the middle of March and we didn't get back here until somewhere around the end of April, so a good amount of time went by where I'm sure this legislation, among other bills, could have been taken care of during that time.

Again I go back to the fact of the minister, the cabinet, this government being out of touch, the Premier being out of touch with northerners, with the needs of northerners.

That was so evident when the Premier decided to reintroduce the vehicle registration fee of \$37 per vehicle in northern Ontario. I can tell you that the number of constituents who have come to me and said that this government, this Premier in particular and the Minister of Northern Development is out of touch is unbelievable. They don't realize the higher gasoline prices that we pay, the roads we put our vehicles over, the distances we travel to go from place to place. I think one of the biggest facts is that we depend on our vehicles in the north and we don't have public transportation.

I was speaking to a grade 10 class in Dryden not too long ago. They were talking about the fear of losing funding for their sports activities. Something this cabinet and this Premier don't seem to realize is that these people, when they're involved in sports activities and competitions, have to travel hundreds of kilometres to compete with other schools. I quite often see teams on the Metro transit here, when I go on the subway, moving from school to school, but for some reason this government has forgotten that. It certainly will be remembered in terms of the reintroduction of that \$37 vehicle registration fee. That puts in the minds of many northerners just how out of touch with them this government is.

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Redistribution is another issue that has really hit northern Ontario, where we're going from 130 seats to 103 seats in the Legislature. Personally, that will create a riding, the Kenora-Rainy River riding, which I certainly hope to represent following the next election, that will be one third of the provincial land mass for one member out of 103.

We had a perfect opportunity there. This is where I say that this government is not listening. When the federal government did redistribution, they listened to the east coast, they listened to the eastern provinces, they listened to the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, and they realized there was a difference. Here, when the committee travelled, they didn't understand and they didn't realize that difference; the Premier did not realize that difference.

We had a perfect opportunity to create a riding that would have stretched across a portion of northern Ontario that might have brought a first nations representative to this Legislature. It was a unique situation, something we were in the midst of changing. If the Premier had slowed down just a bit and had thought about it, it would have been a great opportunity, not to give one member one third of the provincial land mass but it may have allowed for a northern representative from our first nations communities up north. This is something that shows that this government is bent on where they're going, without listening to the concerns of anyone. It goes back to Bill 12 and the need for that to be out there.

As I said, people are becoming frustrated. We hear it when we hear some of our constituents speaking of seceding to Manitoba. As I've often indicated, that would make my job a lot easier. Instead of spending six hours getting here by air, I would spend two hours driving to get to the Manitoba Legislature. I know that once they give that

thought, even though we're being neglected in the north, even though it seems the government has forgotten about us up there — it's something that still is on the minds of many of my constituents.

In closing, I think it's very important to not only the municipal leaders throughout northern Ontario but the many constituents in northern Ontario who have a real concern about the agenda of this government, about where this government is going and the fact that we don't seem to have the representation we deserve in terms of our Minister of Northern Development. Those concerns can be brought to the table by putting Bill 12 on the road, into committee where it will go out to public hearings. Throughout northern Ontario it will be very important at that time.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Wildman: I'd like to comment on the comments of my friend from Kenora. At one point he said this government was bent. I certainly agree with that. I think he went on to say something further to that.

He also said the government is out of touch with northern Ontario. There's no question about that. I suppose that's understandable in that most of the members of the assembly from all parties come from southern Ontario, which is only around 20% of the land mass of the province. They aren't familiar with the north. That's quite understandable. It isn't understandable that the Premier, who comes from North Bay, is out of touch with northern Ontario.

This is a government that appears to stand with its feet in North Bay looking towards southern Ontario, with its back to the rest of the north. Certainly there have been efforts on behalf of the government to attract government jobs and private sector development in North Bay. We've seen the announcement about Bombardier, the water bombers going to North Bay. We've seen the transfer of the Ontario Provincial Police's northeastern Ontario headquarters, the communications facility to North Bay. We've seen the transfer of the northeastern Ontario Ministry of Education offices from Sudbury to North Bay. We've seen a lot of things, that while the cuts have been going on in northern Ontario, devastating communities in northern Ontario, many of these jobs have been moved to North Bay. I suppose that's understandable as well.

But it does indicate that this government doesn't give diddly-squat about northern Ontario, and this piece of legislation is an indication both of the lack of understanding of the north and the needs of the north and the fact that this government doesn't give a damn.

Mr Spina: With respect to the member for Kenora, I only have one quote to offer: "Introduction of this legislation means our members can get down to some of the serious work that must be done to finalize their plans to implement local government realignments," said Neil MacOdrum, president of NOMA. "The government has been open to discussion. This legislation reflects various concerns that NOMA has expressed."

Mr Bartolucci: I'd like to thank the member for Kenora for outlining to the House exactly what the gov-

ernment is perceived as being in northern Ontario. You're perceived as being a government that doesn't care about northern Ontario. You're perceived as being a government that has written off the importance of northern Ontario. You're perceived to be a government that really wants to forget about the people of northern Ontario.

The perception in most people's eyes in northern Ontario is the reality, but you have an opportunity to change that. You have an opportunity to not take one quote and quote it in the House, but to go out. Let's take this on the road. Let's talk at the committee stage to the people of northern Ontario and then come back to the House at third reading and list off the quotes from all the people who have presented before you in northern Ontario.

If you really want to be a government open to the views of northerners, then do what you didn't do with this legislation: Take it on the road. It's got to go to committee. It has to be refined. There have to be amendments. You have to have input from the people of northern Ontario. That's not asking too much from a government that has the Premier a northerner and the Deputy Premier a northerner. I suggest to you that if these are the two most powerful people in this government, they would want to make sure this goes on the road, that this is brought to northerners, that this has northern input and that this reflects what northerners want. At this point in time, regardless of the one or two quotes the government can use, the reality is that the people of northern Ontario want this to be debated in committee.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for Kenora has two minutes to respond.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair reluctantly recognizes the member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Martin: I apologize. I didn't realize that my colleague from Algoma had already gone. I was getting my head around being the next speaker on this bill.

I want to commend the speaker who just laid out so well some of the reasons this bill is not at all a high priority for a whole lot of people in northern Ontario. Given the track record of the government so far, there are so many other things that concern us up there, that we have some direct and immediate issue with, that this bill will for all intents and purposes give the government the vehicle it needs to corral more people into the vehicle that they will use to collect more money to pay for the cost of services that will be downloaded on to so many very fragile communities in northern Ontario right now, that I don't think, given an opportunity to have a look at this, that they will at the end of the day be very excited about it.

I suggest that if this government really wanted to help northern Ontario, if it really wanted to help rural Ontario and some of the smaller communities and outlying communities in this province, it would take another look at some of the cuts it has made to programs that are the heart and soul of many of those communities, programs that provide the resources necessary to keep people in employment, keep people in good health, provide them with the kinds of supports they need for their families and them-

selves. This piece of legislation is just not going to do that. At the end of the day, we're all going to be losers.

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The Acting Speaker: The member for Kenora, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr Miclash: Mr Speaker, I'd like to thank you for allowing the member for Sault Ste Marie to wrap up with his two minutes' comment on what I had said earlier. I always look forward to his comments here in the Legislature. He brought forth a very interesting point, that being the cuts in programs that constituents throughout northern Ontario are facing on a regular basis. That is something we hear about on a daily basis. Whether it be at a hospital, at a school or in the community, we often hear about those cuts to the various programs which are hurting northerners.

As well, the member for Sudbury has indicated that we must take this legislation on the road and hear from the people it is going to affect most, those being our northern constituents, and the fact that we truly need northern input.

The member for Brampton North, a typical government member, was very shallow in his comments, what we get from this government all the time, from these government members, from this Premier, from this cabinet: true shallowness when it comes to the concerns of the folks from northern Ontario.

The member for Algoma talked about North Bay. When you think of a four-hour drive to North Bay compared to about a 24-hour drive that I would face to get home, this is certainly not the true north. I hope the committee, which I hope will take Bill 12 on the road, will get into that area because Ontario does not stop at North Bay. It's quite often hard to get that through the minds of the folks in this government, particularly the Premier and those folks in cabinet, another very good reason this legislation must go to committee and travel throughout the true north.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Martin: I appreciate the opportunity this evening to put a few thoughts on the record re this piece of legislation. However, as is often my wont in this place, I won't be speaking for my full 20 minutes directly to the piece of legislation, because I think others have expounded on it in a way that has been helpful re some of the finer points and details. I'm going to want to place it in some context so that people understand how it fits, or if it fits, or why it fits or perhaps even why the government is bringing it forward at this particular point in time.

I also want to speak perhaps even more directly to some of the things that have happened in northern Ontario over the last three years that I think will, if people are thoughtful about this, present a case for this piece of legislation actually at the end of the day really not being necessary.

We've heard over and over again from the government members who have spoken to this bill, and it's actually rather unfortunate that tonight, given the opportunity for three hours of debate in this place, they haven't seen fit to get up and put some further thoughts on the record.

Mr Wildman: That's not surprising. They don't have anybody who knows anything about the north.

Mr Martin: There are a lot of members across the way who, yes, probably don't know a whole lot about the north, but they seem to know a whole lot about everything else that affects us in this province at this point in time and seem so often so willing to get up and give us all a lecture, give us the benefit of their particular ideological bent on things. I'm surprised tonight, given that we have three hours, that they're not taking the opportunity to dialogue with us. The argument that was used when we changed the rules in this place to rush things through more quickly, to give the government more opportunity to get more of their agenda done, was in fact so that the backbenchers all around the House, and particularly on the government side, because that's where most of them are, would have a chance to get up and, in the diminished amount of time that we all have now, the 20 minutes which soon become 10 minutes, to put on the record their thoughts on some of this legislation that affects every one of us, and each one of the communities that we live in, so directly.

Here we are again. I've been here other evenings, as has the member for Algoma and the member from — is it Kenora-Rainy River or just Kenora?

Mr Miclash: Kenora-Rainy River.

Mr Martin: We spend a lot of time in preparation and in thoughtful study about these things to find that the members from the government side are not particularly keen or interested. I suspect that the reason they're not speaking to this bill and to other bills that come before us of an evening like this is that it's all part of their strategy to push this stuff through, get it done before anybody has a chance to really analyse it, see what it means, so that they can get on with this agenda.

This brings me to the point that I really want to make this evening, and that's the context within which this legislation is about to play out. That's a context of some very damaging, negative reduction in resource and service and opportunity to the communities and the people in northern Ontario.

This bill is not going to go any distance at all in resolving some of those very immediate and disturbing realities. It's enabling legislation, they say, but every time you turn around we have another example of where communities in various parts of this province have actually, under the present legislative structure, found it in their interest to sit down and talk about perhaps coming together and amalgamating and sharing services and finding the efficiencies that come with that. Over the years a number of communities have in fact done that for all the right reasons and taken the appropriate amounts of time to analyse the coming together, to put in place those structures and vehicles they will need to make sure that everybody at the end of the day is served well by that.

Why this legislation at this particular point in time is necessary, if it's not enabling, is beyond me. However, I suspect that it is in fact enabling, that it does in fact give the government new powers to attempt to suck out of northern Ontario ever more of the very scarce resources

that are there now to try to mitigate in some way the very devastating and major impact on those communities of the decisions that have been made over the last three years.

Every time you take away a service or take a job out of a community in northern Ontario, you put northern Ontario in sort of a double jeopardy. You take that resource away; you take that income that's coming in, that is spent in the corner stores and the grocery stores and the clothing stores of the communities within which these folks work. You take that little bit of economic activity out of that community. But even more damaging is the fact that that person who has lost a job, who often contributes to the community in a way that is above and beyond what he does in his or her job, is then taken out of that community, because there are very few alternatives for people.

When you close down a school in the north, it's not just a matter of moving to a school down the road. Oftentimes it's a question of being bused a very long distance to another school. When somebody loses a job, it's not a question of just looking around and saying, "Okay, where am I going to get a job?" There just aren't that many jobs available for people in northern Ontario, particularly in the smaller communities of northern Ontario.

We're always under the threat of this what I call double jeopardy, and you've done that to us in spades over the last two and a half to three years. You've taken away services and then you've downloaded the cost of the remaining services on to the backs of those of us who are left who have employment, who have a way of paying the cost of living in those communities, in a way that creates tremendous stress, tremendous pressure.

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Now I suggest that with this piece of legislation that we have before us here today you're going to give yourselves the power to amalgamate communities in a way that will have more people who you figure have gotten away with not having to pay in any significant way for the services that we all enjoy in that part of northern Ontario, so that you will be able to cover at least some of the cost that you're walking away from. I have to tell you that at the end of the day I don't care how many communities you amalgamate, how many communities you put together or force to come together or force into a marriage, you're not going to find the kind of money to replace the money that you've taken out.

I use my own community as an example all the time because it's the one that I know best. As I've referred to earlier here tonight, it would behoove you on the government side to from time to time listen to those of us who actually work and live in northern Ontario today, who are experiencing first hand the difficulties that are now happening in the lives of individuals and families and communities, communities that we represent, because we have some very compelling stories to tell.

We walk the streets of our community. We go to the grocery stores on the weekends when we're home to do our shopping. We go to church on Sunday morning. We relate with, sit down and talk with, listen to, commiserate with all of those in our communities who have either lost a

job, know somebody in their family or in their friendship circle who have lost a job, or who are themselves on the precipice of perhaps losing their job, who perhaps have been given a pink slip and don't know whether in three or six months from now things don't change they may in fact lose their job as well.

Anybody in today's economy in Ontario and in Canada knows that we are in such a situation that if we lose our job, none of us is ever more than a paycheque or two away from finding ourselves in that very dire circumstance that will call upon us to have to go cap in hand to government for some assistance to carry us through that interim period until we get another job. As I said a few minutes ago, those opportunities are few and far between in northern Ontario, even fewer and farther between now since you've eliminated so many of the very good opportunities that were developed over the years.

We all have the potential at some point down the road to find ourselves in a circumstance where we are dependent on family and friends, dependent on the system. You've done such damage to the system, you've done such damage to even the image of the system by some of the things you've said, by some of the arguments you've made about people who are on assistance of various sorts, that it makes it doubly difficult for those who find themselves in that circumstance.

I have to tell you that it's not one of our finest moments in this province at this particular point in time. We don't live in a society any more in Ontario, primarily driven by the attitude of your government, primarily driven by the example that you set in the way that you treat people who are in difficulty, who are vulnerable, who are marginalized, who are in need of assistance — we find ourselves not being very caring or understanding or compassionate, all of the things that we have prided ourselves on over a long number of years and were evolving into being even more that way over the last 10 or 15 years.

In my own community, if you do the analysis of the impact — and it's interesting. We did have an expert, so to speak, in analysing what would happen to communities if the things that you had proposed to do three years ago were in fact to happen. He did that analysis. A fellow by the name of Atif Kubursi, Econometric Research Ltd, did a study for us in Sault Ste Marie, funded by the Algoma and district labour council and the United Steelworkers of America.

It's interesting. Back then he predicted that "The provincial expenditure cuts are estimated to result in a total income loss of \$48.3 million" in 1996 prices in the Sault. "The sales volume that corresponds to this loss can exceed \$67 million." That's \$67 million out of the economy of a medium-sized community like Sault Ste Marie.

"Over 1,712 person years, full-time job equivalents, will likely be lost in the Sault as a result of these cuts in Ontario. The local tax base will shrink and local tax revenues will sustain a loss of \$1.1 million. These are gross impacts as long as the announced tax cuts will have stimulative effects."

That means that as long as the announced tax cuts actually happen, and if some people who get the tax cut actually spend it — he's predicting somewhere between 50% and 75% expenditure, because we know from the analysis we've done that the people who will benefit most from the tax cut are those who make over \$80,000 a year. They will probably take a lot of that and pay down debt, take a vacation, buy something big that probably isn't going to be sold to them in the community in which they live.

The impact on the community by a tax saving to that level of income earner is not as directly stimulative to a community like Sault Ste Marie or Kenora or Chapleau as making sure that people who have jobs who are in that middle-income range continue to have their jobs so that they spend that money in the community, or making sure that those who find themselves in a difficult circumstance because they don't have a job any more and who happen to rely on social assistance or unemployment insurance actually continue to get that money, because they spend it almost as soon as they get it. Money into the pockets of people on assistance very seldom stays there any more than, I would say, at most maybe half a day, until they can get to the bank and cash the cheque. That money is spent in the corner stores, in the grocery stores and the clothing stores of the communities in which they live. It becomes part of the economy. It circulates. It goes around.

We heard last night in this place all the things this government is doing to try and help small business. I have to tell you, what you've done in northern Ontario particularly has been really, truly directly damaging to small business. In my community alone, and Mr Kubursi is absolutely right, when you put together the \$2 million that we estimate was lost to Sault Ste Marie with the reduction in the levels of income of the poorest among us who were on assistance back in the summer and fall of 1995 — we estimated it at about \$2 million a month — that added up to about \$24 million a year. The mathematics is easy: \$24 million a year.

You add to that then the numbers of people you have knocked off the rolls and who you say are out there in jobs. I'm going to show you in a minute here, by way of the statistics in Sault Ste Marie and the unemployment rate now in our community — I would suggest that probably Thunder Bay is not much different, all of it almost directly related to the downsizing that has happened by way of the cuts by the provincial government. You add to the \$2 million that we know came out simply by way of the 21.6% cut that you made to the income of the poorest among us in the community, the number of people you've knocked who don't have an income any more and who now have done a myriad of things — moved in with other people, gone back to abusive relationships, moved out of town and are now living on the streets of Toronto or wherever they found themselves landing once they stopped running from the very terrible effect of your attitude towards those who find themselves, unfortunately, at the mercy of the market and not being able to find a job — and you're talking probably \$30 million in my community alone.

So you add that \$30 million to the \$67 million that is predicted by way of this study that has now come true in our community — I'll show you in a minute why I say that — and you begin to realize how difficult the situation is and what kind of problem is being faced by the municipal leaders, I suggest, in every community across northern Ontario right now. They're pulling their hair out. They don't know what to do.

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I'll tell you, with this piece of legislation that you're passing now, this enabling legislation that's going to allow more communities to gather together, in your view, to share the wealth, they will in fact be sharing the misery of the impact of your program. They will find it really, really hard.

The only community in northern Ontario that's not going to find it quite as hard was mentioned by my colleague from Algoma a few minutes ago, and that is North Bay. The Premier knows that his community is getting hit just as hard as any other community. There have been studies done in his community similar to the one that was done in Sault Ste Marie that indicate the very same thing, the very same impact.

Here's the study that was done on the public sector side, and I have another study in my hand here that was done re the private sector job situation in North Bay. They are going to be down 1,672 jobs in North Bay. But Mike, who is not a stupid politician, is doing everything in his power to make sure that his back end is shored up before he goes into the provincial election that we know is coming within the next year or so.

Every regional office in northeastern Ontario left standing after Mike Harris was done with the cuts in northern Ontario has been moved to North Bay, every last one of them: education, policing, natural resources, across the board. Not only that, but he did a deal with Bombardier a few months ago that saw the positioning of some 50 to 60 jobs for the next three years in North Bay that Thunder Bay and Sault Ste Marie bid on. Talk about a wild goose chase, being sent down a garden path, but that's what happened.

We debate a bill here today that really isn't going to go any distance at all to solving some of the very immediate and very difficult challenges that the people of northern Ontario face today. Unless this government is willing to turn around and look seriously at our part of northern Ontario, we're sunk.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Questions and comments? The Chair recognizes the member for Kenora.

Mr Michlash: Before I comment on what the member for Sault Ste Marie had to say, I'd just like to comment on the question he asked me at the beginning of his remarks. He was asking whether I was from Kenora-Rainy River or Rainy River-Kenora, and I indicated to him it's actually Kenora-Rainy River but that's going to be after the next election. Right now, your leader is from Rainy River. I'm from Kenora. I just wanted to get that straight.

The member brings up a lot of very interesting comments when it comes to Bill 12 and the reasons we have to get it out to committee. He talks about the sharing of services among communities and amalgamation, which we've all been talking about over the last couple of years because of this government wanting to create fewer municipalities in Ontario. He brings up the question whether this is enabling legislation or not. I have to say that is a worry and a real concern among all of our community leaders as to where this legislation is actually going to take them.

He also touched on the removal of jobs from small-town northern Ontario. I can't agree with him more as to the devastation from the removal of a single job out of a ministry; maybe a senior bureaucrat moving from a place like Kenora down to Thunder Bay when the OPP relocated; many officials from the Ministry of Transportation just going without jobs, and the removal of those jobs in small-town northwestern Ontario. I believe this government has no concept of what that relocation does in terms of these jobs, the dollars that takes out of circulation and the effect that has not only on the family but on the entire community.

Again, there were a good number of points brought forward and some very good reasons why this bill must go to committee.

Mr Wildman: I want to compliment my friend from Sault Ste Marie on his thoughtful remarks. He refers to the context in which we're debating this Bill 12. He talks about all of the small or middle-sized communities in northern Ontario, but he particularly refers to Sault Ste Marie, for obvious reasons.

He talks about the studies that have been done that look at the effect of the removal of a significant amount of income to social assistance recipients. That works out to about \$24 million a year out of the economy of Sault Ste Marie. When that is coupled with the cuts to the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and all the other provincial ministries, plus the cuts to the broader public sector — the cuts to the hospitals, the cuts to public health, the cuts to education — what that means for all of the jobs that are lost, and when you take the total amount of income lost to the community as a result of that, it's no wonder that Sault Ste Marie now is suffering an unemployment rate of double the provincial average: 20%. This is an unemployment rate in the range of those very serious and difficult unemployment rates that we've come to recognize occur in Atlantic Canada, in Newfoundland.

The fact is that the Ministry of Natural Resources, as one example, in Sault Ste Marie used to occupy one half of the Roberta Bondar building, four floors. Now they're down to two. Those jobs have been lost, the income has been lost, and the retail sector and the business community in Sault Ste Marie are suffering as a result.

Mr Bartolucci: I'd like to thank the member for Sault Ste Marie for informing the House about the dilemma that Sault Ste Marie is in because of this government's direction with regard to northern Ontario and northern Ontario

fiscal policies and its direction with regard to employment and our economy. There are serious problems.

If you look at the downloading, which I guess is the reason we're here this evening discussing Bill 12, and you look at the per capita cost of downloading, there are some really surprising statistics. Manitoulin is hardest hit, at an average per capita cost of \$869. Kenora is second in all of the province of Ontario, with a per capita cost of \$694. Rainy River is third, with a per capita cost of \$681. Certainly Timiskaming is number five, with a per capita cost of \$671. The regional municipality of Sudbury is hit at a \$540 cost per capita.

If you look at the per household cost of downloading, you'll see that Rainy River is first, with a per household cost of \$1,502. Kenora is second, \$1,486 per household. Timiskaming is third, \$1,465 per household. The district of Sudbury is fourth, \$1,353. Nipissing is fifth, with a cost of \$1,264 per household. The region of Sudbury is \$1,242.

Yet you ask, is it important for this legislation to get to committee? Is it important for this legislation to be commented on by the people of northern Ontario? How could anyone in this House, regardless of where you sit, whether you sit on the government side or on the opposition side, say it's not important? It is critical that we bring this to committee.

Mr Martin: I thank the members for Algoma and Kenora and Sudbury for taking the time to respond to my comments.

We heard this government a couple of weeks ago talk about how wonderfully well the economy is doing and predicting how wonderfully well it is going to continue to do. Anything north of Barrie we don't feel that impact. We're into big-time recession, probably in some communities bordering on depression. We've lost, by way of the property tax base, \$1.1 million in Sault Ste Marie; in North Bay another \$1.7 million. We add on top of that the cost now of the new services that municipalities are expected to deliver that the province has historically, over many years, seen fit in its wisdom to pay for that they will now have to pay for, and we begin to understand what this bill is all about.

2030

The member for Brampton North quoted from an editorial in the Sault Star. I quote from the Sault Star of May 5: "Sault Taxes Could Rise by 11% to 12%." Another edition of the paper says, "Sault Jobless Rate Hovers Near 20%." As a matter of fact, there was a meeting in Sault Ste Marie just last evening. The municipal government came together in an emergency meeting to consider the very devastating impact of all of the effects of what this government is doing and what it's causing to the industrial sector of our community and to try and come up with some answers.

But I have to tell you, we're all gathered around that table in Sault Ste Marie, as we were in the early 1990s when we struggled with Algoma Steel and St Mary's Paper and the ACR, and you know who's missing? You know who's not at the table? You know who's not there

participating in the way that they should? The provincial government, sadly.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Fort William.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Speaker, I have a confession to make: I can't tell you that I'm really enthusiastic about getting up to participate in the debate on Bill 12.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): We don't want you to do something you don't like.

Mrs McLeod: No, I'm not going to sit down, I say to the member opposite, because I think that no matter how frustrated we get in debating in an almost futile fashion with a government that seems determined to bring in every conceivable dictatorial, bullying measure that they can possibly devise, a government that's only prepared to back off from its bullying if they get publicly embarrassed into doing so, we're not going to stop debating it. We're not going to lie down and let them roll over us with their bullying and dictatorial style.

Occasionally we're successful in being able to publicly embarrass them into backing off from rolling their steamroller through and ramming their legislation through. I think, if I can make a prediction, that we may see this government back off its intention to bring in significant increases in the spending to win the next election, because we may just have publicly embarrassed the government on that issue this afternoon.

But I'm very much afraid, as I get up to debate Bill 12 tonight, that we don't have a lot of hope that we are going to get enough members over there to care about what this does to northern Ontario to be prepared to even send this bill to committee so that northerners can have an opportunity to voice their concerns on this bill. I'm afraid there just aren't enough people there who care.

In fact, as you will have noticed, the members of the government aren't even continuing to participate in the debate this evening. They have nothing to say about a bill that stands in the name of a northern services improvement bill. Surely if this is about improving services in any part of this province, the government members would want to participate enthusiastically in the debate, much more enthusiastically than I feel about participation in a bill which, as my colleague from Port Arthur has said this evening, does absolutely nothing to improve the services in northern Ontario.

This bill takes us right back to the original bully bill of the Mike Harris government, Bill 26. It is one of many measures that we've had occasion to debate that flowed directly from Bill 26. I'm not going to take time in my brief 20 minutes tonight to go into the history of the hospital restructuring commission and the way in which the commission has imposed its will — not supposedly the will of the government since it's an independent arm's-length commission, but its will — on communities across this province by virtue of Bill 26, the bully bill.

But I do want to remind people that it was Bill 26 that set the stage for the ramming through of municipal restructuring. This was a bill that said, "Municipal restructuring can take place through a local consensus," but it didn't

define a local consensus. It certainly made it possible for large municipalities to impose their will on smaller municipalities, and it certainly created the opportunity of the minister, the government to step in and impose their will on communities that could not come up with something that might be considered to be a local consensus on these very, very controversial and divisive issues.

We've got exactly the same thing in Bill 12. We have the power to impose a solution on northern Ontario communities. They have an opportunity. "Enabling legislation," the government says. It reminds me of the Minister of Education talking about the flexibility that he keeps giving to colleges and universities to raise tuition, to make up for the big cuts that they've made to colleges and universities, or the flexibility they've given to local school boards to decide how to make the cuts they've imposed on local school boards. This government is giving municipalities enabling legislation to come up with a local solution to fix the absolute mess that this government has created with its downloading plan.

Once again, Bill 26 revisited. There is conveniently no definition of what a local solution or local consensus on these very difficult issues of restructuring might be. If there can't be an agreement reached, yes indeed, the Minister of Northern Development can determine what the local consensus is and can impose that solution on the municipalities.

I don't consider that particularly enabling. I look at the minister's speech in introducing this bill and he talks about the fact that this is going to make it possible to find savings by reducing waste and duplication at the local level. This is his primary reason for advancing this as a Northern Services Improvement Act. But then he goes on to say: "Think of the possibilities. Instead of individual municipal bureaucracies delivering Ontario Works within an area, only one administrative structure would exist."

Prior to this government's deciding to download social services on to the municipalities, there was one administrative structure. It was called the provincial government. In what way do you make savings as a local northern Ontario municipality by having a new level of government, which will undoubtedly become a regional level of government? We don't have those in the north except for the Sudbury area. We're going to have new regional levels of government that are going to be created in order to deliver services which the provincial government used to deliver itself.

If this government were interested in administrative efficiency — more important, if they were interested even slightly in equity in the delivery of social services — maybe they would have kept the responsibility for delivering those social services themselves.

What this Bill 12 is all about, what the municipal restructuring is all about, is the way to deal with this government's downloading of services. My colleagues have said it, but it needs to be said again. The member for Sudbury again this evening has recognized the fact, with the ministry's own figures, that the downloading of social services on to municipalities has had a particularly dev-

astating effect on northern Ontario municipalities. We are in the top 25% of municipalities that are hardest hit by the municipal downloading.

The government obviously believes that bigger is better, because the only way you can deliver these social services is if you have a large enough area with a large enough tax base that you can afford to pick up the costs that have just been downloaded on to the municipality.

I guess if you're a municipality trying to decide whether bigger is better when it comes to restructuring, you're going to have to try to figure out whether or not the new taxes you might get from your new larger area are actually greater than the new costs of delivering the services in that larger area. That's where the divisiveness, that's where the controversy is going to come in.

I know that larger communities in northern Ontario are not going to like this idea very much at all. They've got quite enough to do with delivering these new downloaded services within their own municipality and managing their own tax base. They're not going to welcome the opportunity this government describes for them in having to pick up a significant share of the cost of delivering services in a vast geographic area that would be the amalgamated area.

Unorganized townships: I remember when the Minister of Northern Development was developing his early plans for municipal restructuring and came into my northern Ontario community and was asked about unorganized townships. He simply said, "We'll take care of that." I'm not sure he understood what an unorganized township was.

These are people who live in areas that don't have an organized municipal area. They pay land tax to the Ministry of Natural Resources so that they can have firefighting and they can have a dump maintained. That's basically it. They don't have the services that organized municipalities have and they haven't asked for those services, therefore they don't pay the taxes for them. The reason they don't have the services is because they live in areas too remote and they're too sparsely populated to expect to have the services that we have in more urban communities.

This government in its wisdom has decided that since it's dropping its responsibility for the delivery of services on to the municipalities, it will of course require that the municipalities deliver those services to everybody, no matter where they live, whether they want the services or not. So you've got to have enabling legislation to allow the municipalities that now have to provide the services to unorganized townships to collect some meagre amount of taxes so they can pay for the services. The problem is that there aren't enough people to pay enough taxes to cover the cost of the services to those unorganized townships. Nobody wins in this.

2040

I think of the farm family in Atikokan that lives in an organized area and has a small farm, a small parcel of land. It is subsistence farming; you're not making a lot of money on your farm in this area outside of Atikokan. They will be forced off their farm if they have to pay the taxes

that would be seen to be their share of the taxes that will be required so they can have services delivered to them that they never asked to have delivered.

I know that the small municipalities are going to have to look, they're going to be forced into looking at some form of restructuring. The only option that's been given to them is to have the minister impose a district services board on them. That is totally unacceptable to northerners. The one thing northerners are going to tell you very strongly is that they'd rather have some measure of their own solution than some solution that's been dumped on them by Queen's Park. They certainly want to have some solution that allows them to have duly elected members rather than appointees, with government essentially controlling the appointment process. The alternative this government offers to their enabling provisions in the legislation are totally unacceptable to northerners.

Small municipalities are going to know they have no choice but to enter into some form of amalgamation in order to get the tax base they need to deliver the services this government now requires that they deliver. They have no choice. This is not enabling. This is a John Snobelen approach, as one of my colleagues said earlier, not a John Snobelen approach to the Lands for Life; this is a John Snobelen "create a crisis" and then a government solution to the crisis they created is somehow supposed to be welcome. That's what this is all about.

Just take ambulance service that the municipalities now have to provide. If there's no amalgamation, if there's no restructuring, if there's no form of regional government created, who the heck pays for the ambulance service? Do you pay for the ambulance service if it's a resident in your particular township or unorganized territory who's involved in illness or an accident and needs the ambulance service, or does each municipality pay for some portion of the ambulance when it crosses the township boundary line? If that's the plan, what do you do about tourists? Are tourists the responsibility of whatever township they happen to be in when they are ill or in an accident? You can't make it work. The downloading of services couldn't work. That's why it was delivered provincially before. It was appropriately delivered by the province.

The government has created an impossible situation and they enable the municipalities to solve the mess they have created by forming an amalgamated structure so that they have some reasonable hope of trying to deliver a service that the government demands they deliver.

Even though small municipalities may be forced into this and unorganized townships will not like it, because they won't like to pay the taxes they are going to have to pay for the services they didn't ask to have to pay for, and the bigger municipalities won't like it because they can't afford to pay the extra share of the costs, the smaller municipalities aren't going to like it even if they're forced into it. They're not going to like it because ultimately they're going to lose their independence as municipalities because that is where this particular train is going. It is going to a regional level of government where the identity of our small municipalities will inevitably be lost. I sus-

pect that when all is said and done, they're not going to like the tax increases that the downloaded services will still mean even if they're being delivered from a larger jurisdiction.

This is divisive legislation. This is a divisive approach to providing services. It is going to be controversial and it is going to continue to be divisive. In that division, in that controversy, the Conservative government — the Minister of Northern Development will come in, Solomon-like, and impose solutions on communities that are not able to come to something he considers to be a local consensus.

This is not optional. There is no real choice here for northern municipalities. They have no choice about whether to amalgamate. They have no choice about the details. The legislation says that local services boards can continue and they can decide whether or not they want to take over the work that's done by local roads boards, except that the Ministry of Northern Development wants all local roads boards to be dissolved within two years. So if the local services boards don't pick up the routes of the local roads boards and the local roads boards are dissolved in two years, who's doing the roads that have been downloaded on to the municipalities? There are no options in this. This is part of the ministry's hands-on, "We are going to force restructuring" approach.

It is better to have an area services board with some accountability to the local residents than it is to have an appointed district services board imposed by Queen's Park. But it's not better than what we had before. It's not better than having reasonable northern support grants in place so that services can be provided in northern communities.

There have been several comments this evening about this being a consultative process. The member for Brampton North referred to the fact that there have been as many as 24 northern communities that have written in with support for a particular proposal around an area services board. The member from Sudbury indicated that at least three of those would have come from three communities within the same area to be amalgamated. So those are supportive, but they're supportive of quite different directions and different solutions. But even then, that's 24 of 187 northern Ontario communities. That doesn't indicate widespread, sweeping enthusiasm for this legislation.

There was not consultation, at least not by the definition that any one of us would give, consultation that means actually talking to people who are going to be affected by the legislation. I know there was not that kind of consultation on the original proposals that came in last December, because our area reeves and our area clerks were scrambling to understand the legalese that was in those original proposals and figure out exactly what was about to be imposed on them.

I know for a fact that this new legislation, this revised, improved legislation, was introduced the day before the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association was meeting, and nobody at that meeting knew the legislation was being brought in or what that legislation contained. That is hardly a process of consultation with the people who are

going to be affected by the legislation. The only thing that can be said about this bill is that it's a better way to deal with a mess the government has created than a way that would be imposed by government.

I have a certain built-in bias in favour of taking the time for real local consensus. Contrary to the remarks from the member for Brampton North, who seemed to imply that no government had ever attempted to deal with these kinds of amalgamation issues in northern Ontario before, I come from a community that was part of a forced marriage imposed by Mr Darcy McKeough of a previous Conservative government. I happen to think that particular marriage was in the best long-term interests of our community. I didn't disagree with the direction at the time. I thought it made, dare I say, common sense and I still think it is the best working arrangement for my community of Thunder Bay.

But I can tell you that 28 years later there are still people who resist the idea of having been forced into a marriage which they did not agree to and give their consent to. I happen to think we would have come to the same conclusion that Mr McKeough came to: that it made sense for our communities to amalgamate. I think it would have been a lot better for us if we'd had a chance to come to that conclusion on our own. But the only way this government knows how to do things is to force them on people, to say, "We know best" — just as Darcy McKeough knew best 28 years ago — "we know best what is right for you."

I have a special word in my last couple of minutes for the member for Brampton North, who suggested earlier this evening not only that they know best what northern Ontario should be doing but that this legislation is the way in which northern Ontario will be freed of its dependency on provincial and federal governments. As a resident of northern Ontario, I am offended by that. I can tell the member for Brampton North that we know what works for northern Ontario. I will tell you too that we pay our way.

My colleagues have spoken about movements to independence in northern Ontario. Those movements are fuelled by the belief that for aeons northern Ontario has poured resource money into southern Ontario without getting back its fair share. I'm not going to make that argument tonight, but I believe absolutely that we pay our way in this province and that we contribute in meaningful ways and are not dependent upon the largess of provincial or federal governments any more than Brampton North is. We take pride as northerners in what we contribute to this province. We know what we can do to have economic growth and economic development in our communities.

2050

I happen to be proud of the fact that I come from a community a thousand miles away from Toronto that manufactures subway cars. Not only do we have some of the largest industries in this province in our forest industries, not only do we produce the minerals that are a large part of our wealth, but we produce subway cars. We are internationally competitive in the production and manu-

facture of subway cars, because we know that we can make that work from our northern Ontario community.

One of the best things that was ever done for northern Ontario was to put in place something called the northern heritage fund, because a former Premier who happened to be the Premier of a Liberal government said, "The solutions for northern Ontario challenges must come from northerners." We have taken that incentive and that belief and we in northern Ontario are making that work. The only thing that gets in our way is the pessimism of a government that really doesn't care what happens in northern Ontario.

It was suggested earlier that there is nobody over there who really understands the north, not even the Premier who seems to be silent even on issues like the motor vehicle registration taxes; certainly not the Deputy Premier who, when he was in opposition as the member for Parry Sound, was very keen to have Parry Sound as a northern community, but that was because we got grants. Now he's cancelled the grants and I don't suppose he's quite as enthusiastic about being a northerner.

We need people to listen to the concerns of northerners and that is why this bill must go out for consultation and hear the concerns of northerners themselves.

Mr Wildman: I'd like to congratulate the member for Fort William on her remarks. I was particularly taken by her comments about the role of the north historically and economically in this province. I think it's important for us to recognize that the wealth of southern Ontario, the wealth of this metropolis in which we are right now, is in fact built on the tremendous resource wealth that has been extracted over the years in northern Ontario. The mines of northern Ontario, the forest industries in northern Ontario, all of those resources have produced the wealth that is enjoyed in southern Ontario. In fact, in the forest industry, for every job in northern Ontario there are about four or five jobs in southern Ontario.

We make no apologies in northern Ontario for the fact that, because of our sparse population and the great distances, in terms of government and public services we've needed assistance in the past, because frankly the government that is providing that assistance has gained tremendous revenues directly from the resource industries in northern Ontario and the spinoff manufacturing industries that use those resources that may be located in the north or in southern Ontario.

For someone to stand in this House and say, "It's time for northern Ontario to stand on its own two feet, it's time for northern Ontario to not be dependent on the south any more," is to ignore the fact that the south is dependent on the north and our resources and always has been.

Mr Gilchrist: It's been my pleasure over the last three years to visit the north on many occasions and in fact just last fall, as part of our ministry's outreach to ensure municipalities had all the facts at their disposal for the municipal transfer of services and the so-called Who Does What exercise, I had the opportunity to talk to municipal leaders all throughout the north about what they thought of the importance of having area service boards, of the im-

portance of letting the north find new efficiencies in government, find new ways of delivering services, find new ways of freeing themselves from the yoke at Queen's Park, making sure that the decisions that are made in the north are done by northerners to the extent it's financially possible.

I'm very intrigued here today to hear from the former leader of the Liberal Party, the one who took them through that oh, so successful, 1995 campaign. I've looked with great interest through their campaign document. For someone who stood here today and railed with indignation at how we aren't sensitive to the north and how we don't understand the north and how this bill doesn't give northerners more tools to be the masters of their own destiny, there's precisely one mention of northern Ontario in their entire book. And what does she propose to give them? Phone-in health care.

That's what she thought for her neighbours, that's what she thought for the other members in her caucus who were running in northern Ontario, not to restore the northern heritage fund that had been beggared by the NDP, not to make new investments in roads, not to make new investments in industry and tourism, and outreach; instead, their idea was to do more of the same old thing that had left this province in despair after 10 years of mismanagement. We've acted. We've had the courage to reflect on what the people in the north have asked for for decades. They're going to have area service boards to allow them to put a local face on municipal restructuring.

Mr Gravelle: I want to compliment the member for Fort William for her, as usual, well-crafted speech and passionate defence of the north, an attempt to explain to the government members what are the realities. For the member for Scarborough East, I think we should probably give him more of an opportunity to speak more often because every time he speaks, northerners get more and more upset, but I'll allow the member for Fort William to respond to that.

I want to relate to one point that the member for Fort William talked about, which was that the first reading of this legislation was brought forward the day before the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association met, literally dropped very suddenly on the Thursday, and indeed the members had no opportunity — the member for Kingston and The Islands was there. He knows that the members at NOMA had no opportunity to really look at it. They had no idea. I managed to bring a copy with me and showed it to some of them. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines was at the bearpit session and he made some reference to it.

What's interesting is that I have a letter here from Dr David Williams, the medical officer of health for the Thunder Bay District Health Unit and he responded to some great concerns very specifically related to public health and I'll try and read some of the remarks he had:

"Public health already has area-wide boards of health which were identified as the model for the proposed DSSABs. Most northern sectors are seeking to increase the number of ASBs above the projected DSSAB number

for the north. This could have the potential of dissecting up the current boards of health into less efficient sub-units. Input from ALPHA" — the Association of Local Public Health Associations — "the OMA and the Ministry of Health would not endorse such a direction. I have attached an official ALPHA position" — with concerns.

"Further concern would be raised on the matter of funding services to the unorganized territories, including first nation reserves and citizens who move back and forth from their reserves and who are citizens of the province and in need of health protection and preventative services. The current unorganized territory grant, while being inadequate, is in place only until the end of March 1999. Is the area services board concept meant to eliminate this grant, thus placing a greater tax burden on citizens of the north?"

I think that's a concern we should all have and Dr Williams has expressed that concern.

Mr Martin: I also want to commend the member for Fort William for a speech well delivered, in keeping with speeches that have been delivered here tonight by members from both opposition parties from northern Ontario. I think on this piece of legislation we speak with one voice. We're unified in our disturbance at what's happening in northern Ontario and how this will not in any way seriously go any distance to alleviating some of the problems we face.

I even say that the member for Brampton North is probably very sincere and genuine in his attempt to give the north something that it can use to try and mitigate some of the very damaging impact of decisions by this government to download, to take services away and to remove jobs and not participate in any serious and significant way in any economic or industrial stimulus of northern Ontario.

That's why he is so supportive of this piece of legislation. He knows because he has lived in Sault Ste Marie of the damage that has been done to many of the communities, of the very difficult times many of the communities in the north are facing, including the Sault, and that we do need some help. He, I think, genuinely believes this bill will do that. I say to him in all sincerity that it won't. It won't do what he anticipates.

From time to time in this House we hear of this government and all that it's doing. They hold up the northern Ontario heritage board as an example of how they're doing something for the north. In fact the Liberals and ourselves spent on average \$30 million a year out of that fund when we were in government to help northern Ontario. I will be surprised if this government in its three years has spent a sum total of \$40 million — over three years, \$40 million. Either the Liberals or ourselves would have spent at least \$90 million trying to help the north. They haven't.

2100

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate the comments of my colleagues. I would just say to the member for Scarborough East, who suggests that the bill in the context of the government's downloading of services somehow will enable

northerners to find new, creative ways of delivering services, that that's not what this does at all. This bill and the government downloading services provide us with the opportunity, in fact the requirement, to provide new services and gives us the privilege of paying for those services. I suggest to the members opposite that this is a government that has a very profound belief that northern Ontario communities are dying anyway and that they might as well help us along by cutting us on the one hand, neglecting us on the other, and dumping the cost of new services on us with a third hand somehow.

This government has done absolutely nothing to ensure that our communities can stay alive by having the services we most need, like access to health care: \$36.4 million which was supposed to be directed towards underserved area medical programs, and we've not seen a single cent of that plan because this government doesn't know how to deal with underserved area programs in northern Ontario and won't respond to any of the proposals that have come from northerners themselves.

This is a government that won't address the issue of northern health travel grants, and that's why I had a constituent who spent \$10,000 of his retirement money to get the health care services he needed.

This is a government that has consistently taken away what other governments put in place: the northern relocation program, which has now been reduced through downsizing to primarily empty buildings in northern Ontario communities. The family support office is closed; the court administration office is closed; the Ministry of the Environment labs closed; the OPP garage in Thunder Bay closed — none of it with any efficiencies. That actually costs money, but the easiest thing to do is to cut northern Ontario services because they're not in sight and that makes them easy to cut.

The New Democratic Party doesn't seem to feel there's much hope to have this bill out to committee so that our concerns can be heard, but we've got to try.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Wildman: I want to intervene in this debate on Bill 12 to try to put the whole issue in some context and to deal specifically with the issue.

The member for Scarborough East seems to be under the impression that northerners, for 20 years, I think he said, have been demanding area service boards. I don't know about my other colleagues from northern Ontario, but I have been living in the north and working in the north and serving the people of the north as a representative for about that same length of time, and until this government decided to deal with their proposal for district service boards, I never heard a great demand for area service boards anywhere in northern Ontario. So how the member for Scarborough East got the impression that this is something northerners have been pressing for for two decades is beyond me. I don't understand it.

Let's understand the history of this. This government decided that it wanted to downsize government, that it wanted to cut costs of government. One of the ways the government decided to do that was to transfer a lot of the

costs and the services to the municipal level of government — to download it.

The government brought in Bill 26, which was going to force a restructuring of government services right across the province. It didn't have anything to do with determining what the local governments wanted or what they perceived to be their needs. It was simply a decision by this government at Queen's Park, centrally, by a small cabal of people working in the Premier's office, to say: "One of the ways the provincial government can save money and not have as many costs is to download it to the municipal level, and we're going to force it through. We're going to use" — what many people described as dictatorial legislation — "and we're going to force it through without any real debate or discussion." It led to a tremendous reaction in the public and in this assembly which finally forced the government to at least hold some hearings.

As part of that downloading exercise and the commitment to punitive action against those who receive social assistance in the province, the government came forward, with the Minister of Community and Social Services, with a proposal for district service boards.

Interjection.

Mr Wildman: What they're talking about is deferring the vote.

The district service boards were proposed by the Minister of Community and Social Services. These were not voluntary boards. These were not boards that could be designed by the communities themselves. These were not boards that were there as an option. This was something that was going to be imposed on the municipalities through Bill 152. This would facilitate the workfare program. It would force the workfare program on to communities that had no real interest in getting involved in forced labour.

When there was a reaction against that in northern Ontario and other parts of the province, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines decided that he had to come up with some option that would try to mitigate the angry reaction against the district service boards in northern Ontario. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines said to the municipal leaders in northern Ontario: "Look, whether you like it or not, this government is going to download all sorts of services on your municipalities and the local ratepayers are going to have to foot the bill. The question is, are you going to do that individually and have district service boards imposed on you, or are the municipalities going to try to come up with some efficiencies by amalgamating to provide the services? You can do this voluntarily, and we will bring forward a bill" — that was Bill 174, which would allow for area services board to be formed "voluntarily."

This was really a Hobson's choice for the municipal leaders. Keep in mind that these municipal leaders have no desire to have the downloading. They are opposed to it. They don't see how these services can be provided or how the local ratepayers can pay for them. They've been told: "That's coming anyway. You don't have any choice. We're going to impose district service boards on you

unless you voluntarily agree to form area services boards that will provide for these services."

As I said, the minister brought forward Bill 174 during the last session, but it was obvious that Bill 174 was not nearly as high a priority for this government as Bill 152. In other words, area service boards weren't as important as a voluntary option as were the district service boards which were going to be imposed by the government. This is a government that likes to impose. They enjoy that, they understand it. It's a power thing. They don't quite understand the same approach in terms of consultation, discussion and voluntary agreement. It takes too long. We have an impatient government.

They weren't that impatient that they moved forward on this, because for some reason the government didn't call Bill 174 for debate before the Christmas break, despite the fact that the bill said within it the municipalities would have to voluntarily join together and discuss and come forward with proposals by March 31, 1998. For some reason, the bill was never passed. It died on the order paper.

Now we have this bill before us. It's all about downloading. One of the other members mentioned earlier — I'll use the Manitoulin figures as an example.

The cost of downloading eight provincial services to Ontario municipalities is higher on Manitoulin Island than anywhere else in the province. Some 64 Ontario municipalities, districts, counties and cities were studied by KPMG to determine the per capita and per household cost of downloading public health, septic inspections, social assistance, social housing, child care, policing, ambulance and property assessment while taking into account the money the municipal governments will derive from their acquisition of provincial offence fines. Those figures showed that it would cost every non-native, year-round Manitoulin resident — man, woman and child — a whopping \$869 to pay for those services over and above what they are currently paying in municipal taxes. That's \$175 more per person than the next most expensive community, which is Kenora, and \$634 more than southern Ontario as a region.

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When you look at the household costs, including cottages, being factored in, Manitoulin Island fares somewhat better. The island resident households are only 12th of the 64 areas studied. However, the per household cost is still a staggering \$1,130. The per household costs range in Ontario from \$1,502 in Rainy River to a low of \$273 in Frontenac. Frontenac also has the lowest per capita cost of \$131.

It is true that there will be the community reinvestment fund and the special circumstances grants to assist in the transition, but those are only in place for a short period of time. By the time we're into the new millennium, these grants will be terminated and the municipalities and local ratepayers will be stuck with these costs.

What is this about? The provincial government is forcing amalgamation on the municipalities of northern Ontario, and frankly most of the other parts of rural southern

Ontario, through the back door by simply saying: "No, no, you don't have to amalgamate, but we're giving you such onerous costs and responsibilities because of the down-loading that the only reasonable thing for you to do is to join together to try and get some efficiency and lower the costs somewhat."

As a northerner, I'm representing a very large area of our province. I'm particularly concerned about this government's attitude towards the residents of unorganized territories, those townships without municipal organization. We talked about the possibility of voluntary forming of ASBs. Well, nobody has yet figured out how the residents of unorganized communities are going to have any say in this process. Arbitrarily, one representative has been appointed in Algoma district to represent the unorganized townships — all the residents of an area which is over 70,000 square kilometres in size. No one individual from one unorganized community will have any possible way of knowing what all the residents of all the unorganized communities across Algoma district really think.

Mr Gilchrist: You're suggesting that you do?

Mr Wildman: Frankly, I travel that area. This individual does not. I happen to know her. She has no money. It's voluntary. She has no way of travelling. There's no cost paid for this. The government hasn't provided any assistance in terms of covering any costs this individual might have in terms of travel, telephone, mail, anything. It's all voluntary.

These unorganized communities, as some members will know, have in the past formed quasi-municipal organizations for specific services. They have local roads boards to provide for roads. They have local service boards to provide for things like garbage collection or dumps, recreation programs — some of them have street lighting; very few — and fire protection. But nowhere in the legislation that covers local services boards are these boards given a mandate to do anything with regard to area service boards. They aren't municipal structures. The individuals who serve on the local service boards are not municipal councillors. They do not have any mandate to speak on behalf of the residents of their communities on any matter related to area service boards, and they know it. Even the individual who has been appointed in Algoma district to represent the unorganized communities in the discussions with the municipalities about forming an area service board does not have any mandate to speak on behalf of the people who live in those areas.

Then, after the proposal was brought forward in Algoma district for three options — one was to have one area service board for all of Algoma district, one was to have one that would include Manitoulin as well as Algoma district, and another was to have a separate one for the city of Sault Ste Marie — all the municipalities in Algoma district were asked to vote on this. So their councillors could indeed discuss it and vote on it, and they did. But the area service board for the unorganized — how are they going to vote on it?

A letter was sent to all the local service boards and local roads boards that said, "Would you please discuss this

and have a vote, to determine whether or not you agree with one or the other of the three options for Algoma district?" I had a number of calls from members of local service boards or local road boards that said: "What is this about? We don't know anything about this." Of course they had had one representative on the group that discussed this but, as I said, she had no way of travelling around or finding out what anybody thought in the unorganized communities.

Then I had a number of local service boards say: "We've looked at the act, and according to the act we don't have any right to make comments on this kind of thing. Under our terms of reference, we're allowed to deal with things like fire protection, garbage collection and recreation, not anything with regard to organizing area service boards."

The fact is, we have a provincial government that knows nothing about northern Ontario and knows even less than that about unorganized communities. This legislation does not in any way respond to the needs of people who live in unorganized communities, and all it's designed to do is to impose on them an organization that will give services that most of them will not benefit from.

The only other thing it's designed to do is to make sure these people who live in unorganized communities and have almost no services now are going to have to pay a lot of money in increased taxes. That's what it's about. It's about ensuring the people who live in Poplar Dale or in Dunns Valley or Searchmont or Waboose or Hawk Junction or Missanabie will have to pay a lot of money for services they will not get, because the services they do get and will continue to get they're already paying for through their local service boards and their local roads boards.

They have roads. They maintain them, they plow them, they grade them. They provide recreation programs, they deal with waste management and they deal with fire protection. But they're not going to get anything out of these proposals to download policing. Well, they may see a cop once in a while. They're certainly not going to get social housing. There's not going to be any senior citizens' housing in Missanabie as a result of this. Land ambulance — well, in some cases they might get an ambulance when they need an ambulance. But if you live in Missanabie, 70 miles from Wawa, and you need an ambulance, you'd better have some other access to nursing care in the local community because you won't survive long enough to make it to Wawa's hospital.

What else are they supposedly going to get out of this? Not much, and they don't know much about it because there's been no money provided to assist the representatives of the unorganized to get around and explain what was going on and find out what people thought. There's been no personnel from the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines who knew anything about this, who could answer any questions and educate people. What this is about is dumping services and responsibilities on local communities in the unorganized areas, on volunteers, and about making them pay for services they're not going to get and over which they have no say.

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This is supposedly voluntary. It's supposed to give northerners greater voice. It's forcing municipalities into something they don't want, because they have no choice. It's forcing the residents of unorganized communities under an umbrella that won't in any way protect them and provide them with the kind of security this government would like them to have.

I started out by saying the member for Scarborough North, who is so knowledgeable about all things and particularly all things northern, said that —

Mr Gerretsen: Scarborough East.

Mr Wildman: Scarborough East. He's so knowledgeable. He said that for two decades the people of northern Ontario have been demanding area service boards. He has been saying they've been wanting this. In fact, nobody in northern Ontario asked for area service boards until they found out that this government was going to impose district service boards on them in terms of community and social services and workfare. Certainly nobody in the unorganized communities demanded this.

It was only because of the downloading that is going to add so many costs to the people of Manitoulin and everywhere else in northern Ontario, the downloading of policing, land ambulance, social services, social housing, all of these things, that the municipal leaders said, "Maybe we should get involved; maybe we should look at an area services board to see if we can save some money." It wasn't voluntary, it wasn't something they wanted. It's something that is being forced on them, and it's certainly not going to serve their best interests and the ratepayers in the municipalities and it's not going to do anything for the unorganized communities.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions? The Chair recognizes the member for Brampton North.

Mr Spina: There are a number of issues the member for Algoma brought forward, none of which are new to me certainly, who was involved in the bulk of these discussions across the north with, as I said, somewhere in between 500 and 600 people over the period of at least a year and a half. I suppose if the Liberals had their way, they'd want to order a \$5-million royal commission on this issue.

Just to address a point the member for Algoma brought forward that I thought was a good and interesting concern, and that's the role of the local services board he spoke of, this bill expands the administrative powers of the LSB to recognize them as the sole authority for the local services under the authorization of the area services board. This could reduce the number of single-purpose bodies, reduce some of the volunteer burnout that's hurting some of these unincorporated areas.

With respect to the comment you made, sir, that people in Missanabie could be paying for services that they will not receive, the board has within its powers the authority to only charge for the services that people will receive. Pure, clean and simple: You get the service; you pay your fair share for it. That's the way the area service board model is structured.

Mr Conway: I want to say how much I've enjoyed the debate tonight. I was interested in the previous speaker's comment about the Liberals wanting a \$5-million commission on northern Ontario. He speaks knowledgeably, because it was the old Davis gang that gave us the Fahlgren commission, which I think went on for about seven years and \$11 million. So we've been down that path before, I say to Mr Spina. We've had a multimillion-dollar commission, and it certainly wasn't a Liberal commission.

Again, like the member from Sudbury, Mr Wildman has drawn our attention to the KPMG study, and it's very telling. This isn't just a fictional document. Somebody went out and retained this bunch of people and they did an analysis. The analysis is pretty bloody breathtaking. I represent a portion of east Nipissing, and I can tell you that the part of Nipissing district that I represent is going to get hammered in this process. We're going to see tax increases of a truly remarkable kind.

Mrs McLeod's comments a few moments ago about the level of taxation for the kinds of services provided and expected is a very telling one, and certainly Mr Wildman makes the point as well. The notion that, generally speaking, we have a public policy now that attaches the payment of land ambulances and public health to local property taxes is in and of itself, in southern Ontario, madness, but the notion of asking people in the unorganized parts of northern Ontario to pay through their realty taxes for land ambulances is madness on stilts.

The cynic in me says, let it happen because, let me tell you, if you want to see a Common Sense Revolution, you'll see one when this policy lands on the taxpayers of the unorganized part of northern Ontario.

Mr Martin: The member for Algoma put forward the argument that needed to be put forward tonight re the impact of the download on unorganized and smaller communities in northern Ontario that some of us don't often speak to because they're not necessarily within the jurisdiction that we represent.

I just want to speak for a couple of seconds in support of what he said. This government does not seem to understand the unique circumstance that we find ourselves in in the north. Other governments have. The previous Conservative government introduced the northern Ontario heritage board, which was an attempt to have some money available to help communities, because anybody who knows the north knows that the economy of northern Ontario is cyclical, more cyclical than in the south.

When a one-industry town has a downturn, everybody suffers. Governments have tried over the years to try and stabilize those economies and put in place policies that would see the bottoms and the tops even out a bit so that we would have some stability as we went forward. The northern Ontario heritage board, which is often touted by this government as a vehicle to help the economy of the north to work with people in communities around the economy of the north, was a fund that under the Liberals and under the New Democrats spent on average \$30 million a year to various and sundry communities to help them out, to work with them, to lever other private sector

money, to have new industries set up and to help industries that were struggling.

This government has spent \$40 million at most, all told, over a three-year period. That's theft. That's stealing from the people of northern Ontario. It's nothing short of that. That's what it is. Previous governments have sent government services into the north because we know that we can deliver them there in order to stabilize the economy. The lottery corporation is an example. The Liberals sent that to the Sault. It was much appreciated. What did this government do? They took it away.

Mr Gilchrist: I'm always interested in the comments from the member for Algoma. Certainly he brings a history as a member of very long standing in this House, and as such I think should be accorded some considerable recognition and some weight in his comments.

I guess when we talk about people who think they know it all, I would have thought the member would have a subscription to the largest local daily newspaper, the Sault Star. His suggestion that no one else thinks this is an issue that has been simmering for some time — I didn't pick any specific number of years. I said decades. But if you want to say 20 years, let's do that.

"Area service boards are an idea that has existed in some shape or form for a couple of decades. As the cost of doing government business soars and the population of many northern centres remains static or even declines, ASBs have been seen" — past tense; they said, "have been seen" — "as a way to rationalize services over a larger, more sparsely populated area." That is the Sault Star, August 27, 1997.

With the greatest respect to the member, you're the one suggesting as a know-it-all that you speak for everyone in Algoma, that you don't think anyone else has talked about the issue of ASBs, that no one else believes there is a way for municipalities to find new efficiencies, to find new ways of being effective, to find better ways of delivering services for lower cost, specifically because of the geography, specifically because of the lack of population density.

It is precisely for that reason, far more than any area in the south, that you need to have that integration in services. You need to take a big-picture approach. Clearly, the Sault Star and others in the north, many municipal leaders, have long held the view that ASBs are important. It's a shame you haven't listened to them all these years.

Mr Wildman: I want to thank my friends from Brampton North, Renfrew North, Sault Ste Marie and Scarborough East for their measured comments.

I understand the member for Brampton North's comments about the local services board under this legislation in that they will be given a mandate according to this bill to be the one service deliverer. I understand that. The point I was raising in my remarks is the difficulty of local services boards, as they are currently constituted, in having any opinion and being able to survey the residents and express any view with regard to proposals for the formation of area services boards and the fact that they don't have the money to do the kind of work that is being expected of them.

The member for Renfrew North hits the nail right on the head. The point is, this is going to mean enormous tax increases for residents of unorganized, as well as organized, municipalities in northern Ontario but, in particular, in the unorganized it's going to mean enormous increases and they're not going to get the services. It's as simple as that, no matter how integrated they might be, to use the term used by the member for Scarborough East.

Just in response to the member for Scarborough East, if he considers it a mark of respect to refer to someone as a know-it-all, I'm not sure what to say. I will just say this: I give as much credence to the Sault Star as I do to most of Conrad Black's periodicals. The fact is that the area services boards are not freely entered into by municipalities or residents of unorganized. They are simply put there as an option to avoid having district services boards imposed on them.

The Acting Speaker: It being past 9:30, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2133.

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		Nickel Belt	Vacant

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 3 June 1998

Mercredi 3 juin 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 3 June 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 3 juin 1998

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): What do prominent New York investment banker, a vice-president of the Montreal Expos, a Canadian Olympic Association executive and the president of an international mining equipment manufacturing company have in common? Aside from building a very impressive business career, they are also all graduates of Laurentian University.

Today congratulations go out to André Beaudry, director of alumni services, and his staff for the enormous support that the launch of the new magazine, entitled *Laurentian University Magazine*, received at its unveiling yesterday. Our community is excited about this new publication and its highlighting of our graduates and our university.

In spite of the Mike Harris government's assault on universities such as Laurentian through reduced funding, higher tuition fees and tuition deregulation for certain programs, which have a direct negative effect on smaller universities, bright, aggressive, articulate and creative people like André Beaudry will work tirelessly to ensure the survival of Laurentian.

With the arrival of our new and dynamic president, Dr Jean Watters, and the likes of André Beaudry, Laurentian University will survive this government in spite of its assault on it.

The measure of any educational institution is the success of its graduates. We at Laurentian are very proud of our graduates. People like André Beaudry are going to make sure the world knows just how great Laurentian and its graduates really are.

PROSECUTION OF PANHANDLERS

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Every day that I walk down the streets of Toronto now I become more and more disturbed by what I see. Even more important, I've become more and more disturbed by the unchanging and unrelenting attack by this government on those who are most unfortunate and most poor and most marginalized in our communities. Every day something new hits me in the face re the attack on people who find themselves unfortunately in some very desperate circumstances.

Today I picked up a flyer and it says:

"Why is the TTC Prosecuting the Homeless?"

"Every day in court homeless people are being prosecuted by the TTC and handed fines as high as \$200 for simply seeking spare change on TTC property. Most are described as standing silently, cap in hand or sign at their feet, seeking a bit of spare change for a coffee or a meal. Most cannot be in court to answer these charges; they have no address to mail the court notice to, so there's no one to speak up on their behalf."

When is this government going to stop? When is this government going to realize that what it's doing is immoral, is unethical, is not in keeping with the best traditions of this province and this country? When is government going to realize that when you attack the vulnerable and the marginalized, ultimately it comes back to get you, that the disease and the sickness that you're perpetrating and encouraging in this province will eventually hurt us all?

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S GAMES MILLENNIUM FESTIVAL

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): I'm pleased to have this opportunity today to highlight a very special event that is being planned for my community of Hamilton.

Last year, the city of Hamilton won the bid to host the International Children's Games Millennium Festival in the year 2000. The goal of the festival is to involve approximately 5,000 athletes from some 100 cities representing all five continents.

The festival's theme, *The Spirit Unites*, represents the aspiration of youth around the world to come together to embrace the Olympic spirit of fair play and international competition as well as to celebrate the arts and cultural exchange.

The city of Hamilton, as host city, is committed to promoting international peace and goodwill, fostering national pride through the promotion of Canadian values, fair play, excellence, equality, acceptance of cultural differences and showcasing these values to other cities and nations worldwide. It is also committed to encouraging young athletes to participate in a wider variety of sports through exposure to them at the festival.

I would like to congratulate all those individuals who have worked tirelessly to put this bid together, in particular Mr John Kiriakopoulos and Mr Greg Maychak. There is still much work to be done within the next two

years to prepare for this special event, but we are hopeful we will get the support we need to make this an extraordinary success for Hamilton, for the participants and for Canada.

AVIE BENNETT

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): On Friday, May 29, York University welcomed a new chancellor. Avie Bennett, a distinguished Canadian, noted publisher and corporate citizen, was installed as York's tenth chancellor at a special convocation. Mr Bennett brings a wealth of experience and qualifications to the post. He is a man with an abiding passion for the arts and culture, respected in the corporate world and knowledgeable about universities.

As chairman, president and CEO of McClelland and Stewart, he has fiercely promoted Canadian writers. As chairman and president of First Plaza Inc he has an outstanding array of experience in corporate matters. As a former member of the governing council of the University of Toronto, where he and I were colleagues, he has a demonstrated and thorough understanding of higher education.

His professional and community activities have earned him many honours: the Order of Canada and the Order of Ontario as well as honorary degrees from the University of Toronto and the University of Ottawa. Therefore, when Avie Bennett speaks he must be taken seriously.

Last Friday, he left no doubt that access to higher education is not negotiable. He praised the merits of an arts education at a time when higher education as a vehicle solely for corporate training has been the fashion.

Finally, he stated: "No student should face life after graduation so burdened by debt that he or she does not face the future with unbridled optimism."

Congratulations to Chancellor Bennett on his vision and his wisdom. But, above all, congratulations to York University for its inspired choice of an extraordinary leader.

SRUCE FALLS MILL

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): This coming Friday on June 5, Spruce Falls will be holding Environmental Awareness Day at its mill site in Kapuskasing. One of the highlights will be the planting of the 200 millionth tree on the Gordens Cosens Forest managed by the company, which is a division of Tembec.

The ceremonial tree planting symbolizes the strength and enduring resilience of the thousands of men and woman who have contributed to the success of Spruce Falls over the past six decades.

I am proud to have been associated with this company, first as a millwright for 28 years, then as part of the NDP government, and a PA to the Minister of Natural Resources, that helped secure the workers' buyout of the mill.

In 1989, the New York Times and Kimberly-Clark had put the mill up for sale and wanted to get rid of it. In 1991,

confronted with the prospect of losing hundreds of jobs, the community came together. Over 1,000 employees and 500 retired workers and residents of Kapuskasing joined up to save the troubled mill.

My colleague from Sudbury, Shelley Martel, then Minister of Northern Development and Mines, played a key role in helping the workers' buyout. Today, Spruce Falls is wholly owned by Tembec and is a leader in the forestry industry.

The planting of the 200 millionth tree this coming Friday is a testament to the past, present and future of the community in Kapuskasing and is a milestone which we can be immensely proud of for years and years to come.

DURHAM UNIVERSITY CENTRE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I am pleased to rise in the House today to acknowledge a generous donation made by General Motors of Canada to the Durham University Centre. President Maureen Kempston Darkes, on behalf of General Motors, donated \$1 million to the Creating Futures campaign. This campaign is a two-phased funding initiative linked to the more permanent establishment of the Durham University Centre.

The Durham University Centre is a collaboration between Durham College, Trent University and York University. These two universities now deliver degree-level programs at Durham College. I fully support this initiative by Durham College to establish programs for the residents of Durham region. Durham University Centre offers an affordable, accessible alternative for students. Students in Durham are now able to remain at home while taking advantage of degree-level programs.

With the \$1-million donation from General Motors and an additional \$1 million donated by the CAW — Dave Broadbent — and GM employees, Durham University Centre is closer to its goal of \$12 million. Under the leadership of Durham College president Gary Polonsky and the chair, Joyce Marshall, Durham University Centre has raised \$11.2 in a two-year campaign now under way. I congratulate the organizers of the Creating Futures campaign and am confident they will reach their goal. It means that constituents of my constituency of Durham East will receive a high-quality university education at home. There are many members: the Mackie family, Peter Zakarow —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

1340

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The word is out that representatives of the Ontario hospital restructuring commission, or, as many refer to it, the hospital destruction commission, will be invading the Niagara region tomorrow to begin some preliminary discussions about hospitals and health care in Niagara. Many residents of Niagara and St Catharines wish they would stay

home because in so many areas they have closed and forced mergers of hospitals.

The solution of the Harris Conservatives to our health care challenges is to drastically reduce hospital operating funding, shut the doors of hospitals or radically alter the role of hospitals within our communities. Instead, what we need in the Niagara region is a substantial increase in the funding of the operations of our hospitals, more and expanded long-term-care facilities and additional funds for home care. We require improved emergency room care, far better mental health services and an end to the new practice of discharging patients too quickly and too sickly.

Most of all, Mark Rochon, Shelley Jamieson and Dan Ross should remember the commitment of Mike Harris during the leaders' debate in May 1995 during the provincial election campaign when he said, "Certainly, I can guarantee you, it is not my plan to close hospitals." Forcing the merger of hospitals is closing hospitals.

Niagara has, on a per capita basis, the highest population of people over the age of 55 in Ontario and needs more, not less, acute and chronic care for its residents. A good start would be to restore the \$43 million slated to be cut from hospital operating budgets in Niagara and provide significant increases in funding beyond that inadequate base.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Yesterday in this House the minister, through a question from our leader, Mr Howard Hampton, responded by saying, and with some pride, that her government had cut yet another \$225 million from hospital budgets across the province. This is in addition to the money the government has already taken out of hospitals, to the tune of about \$1 billion that has been taken out of the hospital system since this government took office.

We need to put that in the context of what it means in communities across Ontario and, specifically, what it means to communities across the Cochrane district from Timmins to Hearst to James Bay. It means that hospitals now are letting go staff or cutting services within communities that is going to make it more difficult for people in our communities in northern Ontario, and specifically in the Cochrane district, to get services.

What's worse, at the same time that this government is cutting hospital budgets across the Cochrane district, they are not, contrary to what the minister is saying, doing any kind of reinvestment into the community long-term-care system and the community health system to make sure that people who fall through the cracks, because they can't get service out of their hospitals, will now be able to get it out of the community care access centres.

I call on this government and I call on this minister to make sure that we properly, adequately fund the community care system in order to make sure that people across the Cochrane district are able to get the services they need and deserve from their government.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I rise this afternoon to pay tribute to the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals as they prepare for their annual conference, which will be taking place in Orillia from June 18 to June 20. The society, which is headquartered in Newmarket, is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year. An example of their important work was evident during the ice storm disaster relief efforts in eastern Ontario earlier this year.

The Ontario SPCA spearheaded the delivery of eight tractor-trailer loads of animal supplies, equipment and food to local humane societies throughout the affected areas. Working in cooperation with many of its 60 local member humane societies, the OSPCA arranged for the transfer of animals sheltered in eastern Ontario to other shelters, thereby freeing up room for pets that had to be left behind when their owners were evacuated.

This was a tremendous relief for responsible pet owners who had been reluctant to leave their homes because their pets weren't allowed in the evacuation centres. Staff and volunteers also provided food and water for many other animals that had to be left behind.

For 125 years the OSPCA has played an important role in our society and, thanks to the society's many volunteers across our province, that work continues today. I ask members of this House and all Ontarians to join with me in acknowledging and respecting the work of this great organization.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg leave to inform the House that today the Clerk received the second report of the standing committee on government agencies pursuant to standing order 105(g)(9). The report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a question for the Premier in regard to the ongoing issues around the issuing of Casino Niagara's contract. It's been alleged that one Michael French, an international gaming consultant, was hired by a Toronto business group to advise it on how to secure casino deals in various parts of the world. During that same period, Mr French was retained by the Ontario government to run the competitions to select private operators for the \$411-million Niagara Falls casino and a series of 44 charity casinos.

Premier, are you satisfied that the process that was followed has ensured the integrity of the process and has protected the best interests of Ontario taxpayers?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the Chair of Management Board will be here shortly and is looking into some of the specifics, as requested by this Legislature, concerning Coopers and Lybrand. Every indication we have is that we should be satisfied.

But I think you raised some concerns earlier this week — either you or the New Democratic Party — and the minister is proceeding, as I think he was requested to do and indicated he would, in looking at those allegations specific to the individual you have named and Coopers and Lybrand. He is proceeding with that in a thorough and responsible manner with the OCC and he'll certainly report to you as soon as we find out anything more.

Mr Duncan: Premier, the minister has said repeatedly that your government is following the same process that was followed in the selection of the operator for Casino Windsor. In fact the process is quite different. In the selection of the operator for Casino Windsor the evaluation committee was composed of five senior public servants, employed at the time by the government of Ontario. In this case your government, allegedly under instructions from your office, appointed a committee composed of private sector interests with strong ties to your political party to conduct this evaluation. It is alleged that those instructions came from your office. It is alleged that the whole process has been influenced by this very distinct approach to the Niagara casino.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question?

Mr Duncan: Would you confirm today that in fact the process was different and that in the selection of the operator for Niagara Falls, rather than a committee of senior public —

The Speaker: Thank you. Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: I can confirm to you that those allegations are false, without foundation and ridiculous, quite frankly, and the process is identical.

1350

Mr Duncan: The Premier may want to consult his ministry and he may want to even consult the Ontario Casino Corp's call for proposals, which obviously you haven't done. What makes it even more disconcerting is that the so-called investigation you're undertaking on Casino Niagara is being undertaken by the Ontario Casino Corp.

Let me read to the Premier grounds for disqualification under section (f) of the request for proposals:

"Disqualification may result from any attempt on the part of proponents or any of their employees, agents, contractors or representatives to contact any of the following people: the selection committee, the review panel, any experts advising the selection panel, any member of cabinet or their staff, any member of the public service, any member of the board of directors or advisers to the Ontario Casino Corp."

It has now been established that your appointee to this evaluation committee not only contacted but was actually doing work for one of the proponents; in fact the proponent was successful. Do you still believe, Premier, in spite of this, in spite of your own government's document, that this is a fair process? We say it's not. We say —

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: Given that I had absolutely no appointees, your question is false, without premise, has no bearing in fact and is silly and ridiculous.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Duncan: We'd like to speak to the government today about the process surrounding the awarding of tenders on the charitable casinos. I'll direct this question to the Premier. We have in our possession a document that clearly outlines the same kinds of conflicts and the same kinds of restrictions and the same kinds of disqualifications for successfully getting a charitable casino.

Would the Premier tell this House today if he's satisfied the process for awarding those charitable casinos has been fair and aboveboard and if in fact the request for proposals has been followed to a T?

Hon Mr Harris: To the best of my knowledge, yes. The Chair of Management Board I think has indicated that as well. But there was a question that was raised with regard to Coopers and Lybrand and the suggestion that we should doublecheck that. The minister is doing that.

Mr Duncan: Premier, the request for proposals on the charitable gaming houses was released on February 17, 1997.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The Mike Harris gambling halls.

Mr Duncan: The Mike Harris gambling halls, that's correct.

"Any attempt on the part of the proponents or any of their employees, servants, agents, contractors or representatives to contact or directly or indirectly influence any of the following: evaluation selection committee members, the selection committee, the minister's office and staff, the Premier's office or cabinet office, are grounds for disqualification."

We have learned since yesterday that in fact one, two, three, four, five of the successful proponents on the charitable casino corporations made substantial financial contributions to your party in 1997, subsequent to the issue of the request for proposals.

Premier, are you satisfied that this is a fair process that hasn't been influenced by money?

Hon Mr Harris: Absolutely, positively, and I think if you'll check with the unsuccessful proponents you'll find a substantial number of those through related companies have made contributions to our party, to your party and, in the case of one particular family, to the New Democratic Party as well. It has absolutely no bearing; it has no influence. No decision-makers would have any knowledge of any of that information.

Mr Duncan: Premier, then perhaps you'll be prepared to put this to a full inquiry so we can look at all the facts. The facts are, Premier, that Fundtime Corp gave money to your party; Trillium Gaming Inc gave money to your party; RPC Anchor Gaming gave money to your party; CHC North gave money to your party. A number of the directors of these organizations gave money to your campaign as well.

Premier, are you satisfied the process is in place and will you not allow for a proper inquiry to get to the bottom of all these issues?

Hon Mr Harris: Yes, I'm satisfied that none of the decision-makers would have any knowledge or any record or any concern or any care in which companies donate to our party, your party or the New Democratic Party.

The Speaker: New question, third party.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I put a question to the Premier. You know that over the course of the last week and a half a number of issues have been raised surrounding the conflict of interest vis-à-vis the Niagara Falls casino. Your government's response has been some feckless political damage control and, quite frankly, coverup.

It has been reported in recent press reports that Michael French was responsible for your casino contests and that he also participated in the Falls Management bid, which was bumped up from third to number one. We have read media reports stating that two insiders have said the decision to have French run the process came from the highest levels of the Tory government.

Who gave the political direction to have French run the process? Was it you? Was it your staff? Was it Leslie Noble? Was it Tom Long? Was it Debbie Hutton? Or was it your long-time consultant and adviser to the Latner family, George Boddington? Who gave the orders to put French in charge of his own Falls Management bid?

Hon Mr Harris: I actually have checked because the question has been raised around Mr French, who is an American, as I understand, but works with Coopers and Lybrand. We have said we are trying to ascertain from Coopers and Lybrand whether there was any violation of any of the provisions that were there. We have been told not, but we've certainly checked.

I have never heard of him before it has been raised here, nor has the former minister, nor has the current minister, nor do I think have any of the individuals you have named. I am aware that Mr Alfieri, who you appointed to head the casino corporation, had a working relationship with him. That's all I have been able to ascertain so far.

Mr Kormos: This looks more and more like the cover-up that more and more Ontarians are believing it to be.

Premier, your big campaign contributors, like the Latners, have undoubtedly benefited from the policy changes of your government. There's no doubt about that, no question. We've raised issues involving Falls Management and their bid for the Niagara casino, and of course that company is owned in part by the Latner family. They also have a major interest in Gaming Venture Group, one of the companies awarded contracts for permanent charity gaming casinos.

Premier, guess who works for the Latners. George Boddington. You don't know him either? That's the same George Boddington who was part of your transition team, the same George Boddington who was involved with the Bradgate group that wrote the original draft of the Common Sense Revolution. Boddington also in the past worked as executive assistant to former Tory cabinet

ministers. Premier, you know George Boddington, you know that he works for the Latners and you know that he was part of the Ontario gaming coalition. One of your most trusted advisers is intimately connected to the companies that have been awarded casino contracts.

Bill Noble, Leslie Noble's brother, also works for Gaming Venture. The cloud gets darker and darker.

When are you going to call an independent and public investigation?

Hon Mr Harris: Your original question dealt with who knew Michael French and to date, other than Alfieri who seems to have retained him, I don't know anybody else who knew of him or who counted on his advice. You certainly counted on his advice when you were in government and you appointed Alfieri. The process was there. My understanding is he continued to retain him, to count on his advice from the viewpoint of the Ontario Casino Corp. Given that we have the same process you had, that would be logical and that's what I have been able to ascertain so far.

With regard to the Latner family, a family who have done business in this province for over 50 years in the area of construction, a supplier of services to the government, a company which has been under your government the largest private sector contractor to run government housing and residential buildings, also the largest under the Liberal Party, a family who donated \$5,000 to your government when you were in office, a family who had Bob Rae at the ribbon-cutting of one of your projects —

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Premier, come to order. Come to order, please. Premier, come to order. Premier, I am not going to warn you any more. Come to order.

I would remind the Premier that when I'm standing he must come to order. Everyone gets the same amount of time to ask and answer the questions.

1400

Mr Kormos: We're just relating the facts, Premier.

The Speaker: Order. Final supplementary.

Mr Kormos: And if some Novocain should be administered, well, let's administer it; I think we're getting close to a nerve here.

Let's talk about George Boddington. You know George Boddington. He's a Tory lobbyist. He's been one of your most trusted advisors. He helped you interview Rita Burak for her job. He helped you decide who was going to be in your cabinet. Now one of his major clients — yes, who donated 48 grand to the Tory party coffers — is suddenly being awarded casino contracts all over Ontario.

Premier, your friends and your advisers are clearly involved. This, quite frankly, looks very much like the Patti Starr affair. It stinks. It's a political coverup.

There's only one way to clear the air: Open up the process. We need an open and independent airing of these conflict-of-interest charges. Your own investigations into this matter through the OCC are so tainted, and you know it. Clear the air. Call a public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act. Why won't you?

Hon Mr Harris: I think both you and the Liberals have raised the issue of Coopers and Lybrand. We have asked for a report on that and are prepared to release that.

Other than that, other than flagrant smearing of a very responsible, ethical family who have done business with your government, with the NDP government, people who have had absolutely nothing in any decision-making process, allegations you refuse to make outside, there is absolutely nothing there. You want us to look at Michael French? We're looking at Michael French.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Once again to the Premier, and I'm sure he'll have chances to explain his connections with George Boddington and Boddington's connections with that successful casino bid as the days go on.

Two days ago our member raised on a point of order the most novel interference with the rights of members under section 124, and that is your government having put Bill 15, a budget bill, before the administration of justice committee knowing that it would displace our request, as of right, that that committee consider your involvement, your Attorney General's involvement and your Solicitor General's involvement in the Ipperwash affair.

You know that type of bill belongs in the finance and economic affairs committee. You also know that the justice committee will not be permitted to proceed with its inquiry of your involvement, your Attorney General's involvement and your Solicitor General's involvement in the death of Dudley George until that bill is dealt with. That was purposely referred there to obstruct the course of that modest investigation.

What are you hiding, Premier? What are you so afraid of that you won't want this matter referred to the justice committee?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Absolutely nothing.

Mr Kormos: Members of this Assembly have never witnessed a more blatant attempt to stonewall the very same members who have, as of right, the prerogative of calling a matter before a committee. You can't explain your way out of this one. It's obvious to us what you're doing. It's obvious to the family of Dudley George. It's obvious to all the people of this province who care about justice and truth. There's no reason for that economic and finance budget bill to go before the justice committee.

Let's see how far you're going to go, Premier, because today we'll be delivering to every standing committee of this House a request by our members of each and every one of those committees to deal with an investigation into your involvement, the Attorney General's involvement and the Solicitor General's involvement into the Ipperwash affair.

I tell you, it's going to happen. You can keep on stonewalling or you can come clean. You've got a chance to set the record straight once and for all. Will you agree to appear before the committee on this matter, and will you commit your staff to appearing before the committee?

Hon Mr Harris: I guess there are two issues. You raised this as a point of order and you were told that nothing was out of order, so procedurally you have no grounds to raise an allegation of that type.

With regard to the specific incident, I think we would all agree that the incident at Ipperwash was a tragedy. There are outstanding matters before the courts and we're not in a position either to order an inquiry or to respond in a public way in any way that would jeopardize those issues that are before the courts. So you can play games if you like, you can do whatever you want, but the facts of the matter have been pretty well articulated here in this Legislature and outside the Legislature.

Mr Kormos: The Premier knows that the matters before the court are entirely separate and distinct from the issue of the Premier's involvement, the Attorney General's involvement and the Solicitor General's involvement in the death of Dudley George at Ipperwash park.

Premier, we're going to be relentless on this matter. You'd better know it if you don't know it yet. We're doing everything in our power to ensure that those events surrounding Dudley George's death are brought to light.

You can end it so quickly, because we both know that the only way to get the answers and finally set the record straight is to call for a public inquiry. Premier, do the right thing. Will you call a public inquiry into the fatal shooting of Dudley George?

Hon Mr Harris: You have had the answers of all of our involvement, of anything to do with any OPP actions. You just don't seem to like to accept the truth.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): To the Minister of Transportation: As you know, there are over 55,000 motor vehicle collisions at intersections throughout Ontario every year. Every 12 minutes motorists run a red light at one of the 1,800 signalized intersections here in Toronto alone. At peak hours, a red light is run every five minutes. Sadly, in Hamilton last week another person lost their life as a result of a red light running. Ironically, Hamilton is among many municipalities that have begged your government for the right to install red light cameras.

I have introduced a private member's bill which will be discussed tomorrow in second reading. I wonder if I can count on your support so that we can work together to help make these intersections safer?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): I thank the honourable member for the question. Indeed, he is right that one collision is one too many to happen at our intersections. One fatality is one fatality too many. Sadly, 2.9% of all traffic fatalities occur because of red light running and that's 2.9% too high. I agree with the honourable member there.

I can tell the honourable member that in the sense that his bill is brought with the principle of reducing red light running and with the principle of reducing fatalities, we agree with that principle.

Mr Colle: I take that to mean that you will be supporting my bill. I hope to work together with you to

ensure that municipalities will get the opportunity to install these safety devices. I hope we can work together on that in coming up with the right technology. Let's work together on that with the members of your caucus and ensure that municipalities get that right.

Hon Mr Clement: I fully accept the honourable member's offer to be helpful in this regard. The honourable member should know that myself and Mr Bob Runciman, Solicitor General as he then was, wrote to Mayor Mel Lastman, wrote to Mayor Hazel McCallion and said, "We want to sit down with you to come up with something workable."

We all agree with the principle. I agree with the Liberal Party in terms of the principle; we all do. The devil is in the detail. The devil is in having a system that works, that targets the aggressive driver to reduce this kind of behaviour. If he wants to get on board and persuade Mel Lastman and persuade Hazel McCallion to come to the table with a workable solution, I accept that challenge and I accept his advice and his help on that.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Premier. As you know, this morning in the finance committee we dealt with Bill 16, the property tax bill. I ask you this in the absence of the Minister of Finance, who is responsible for this bill. The minister chose not to attend the committee. Your members on the committee, presumably on instructions from the minister and/or you, chose not to tell us what amendments will be moved in committee by the government this afternoon, this despite the fact that you by all accounts, even from people who support this legislation, are causing chaos out there in the system. People don't know what's going to happen.

One of the points AMO made is that your 2.5% cap, as you have put it, will severely limit future taxation options of municipalities with respect to capped tax increases because it puts them in a situation where any tax increases must be borne by the remaining uncapped tax classes, which means residential or farm land assessment. One of the options they and others have put forward is that you should limit the 2.5% cap on the assessment increase and not on the overall increase. Will you be doing that this afternoon in committee, Premier?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the minister has consulted extensively, and it sounds like you have too. We'll have an open mind, as we always do in the committee process, and if you have constructive suggestions to make, we'll look forward to that.

1410

Mr Silipo: Premier, perhaps you fail to appreciate that you've time-allocated this bill. You chose not to take our advice and our suggestion of about three or four weeks ago which would have allowed ample time in committee to deal with this bill and would have had the bill back in the House by this week and done, if that's what you had wanted to do, and helped to deal with some of the problems out there. You chose to leave it out there to deal

with at the last moment, now with the realization that some amendments are going to have to come, but we don't know what they are.

Unless you also want to continue the charade we saw this morning, which would have us believe that between noon and 2 o'clock this afternoon your folks in the ministry were busy drafting amendments, all I'm asking is, will you tell us what those amendments are going to be; and particularly, will you deal with the 2.5% cap either in the way I've suggested or in the alternative way which some presenters have suggested, which is that if you're going to give small businesses and businesses in general a 2.5% cap, you should be prepared to do the same thing with respect to homeowners. Can we know that you will at least do that, Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: I understand amendments have been tabled at 2 pm today, so they're there. Maybe you would have liked them rushed and tabled sooner, without extensive consultation. On the other hand, the minister opted —

Interjections.

Mr Silipo: What consultations?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: On the other hand, the minister opted to continue the consultations certainly as long as he can. I understand that amendments have been tabled and I am told they are to be discussed at the finance committee tomorrow. I might also add that to the best of my knowledge, there is absolutely not a single thing in anything I can see on the horizon that we are doing, and I don't think municipalities want to do anything, to cause any kind of tax increase anywhere, on any class of taxpayers in Ontario. I fully expect that we will see taxes go down for businesses, for commercial, for farms and for residential homeowners over the next three years.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce in the Speaker's gallery in the Legislative Assembly today the Honourable Palanivel Rajan, Speaker of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. Please join me in welcoming him. Welcome.

We also have in the Speaker's gallery the Honourable Wade Mark, Minister of Public Administration, and Cyril Blanchfield, Consul General for the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Welcome.

I don't think a session would be complete unless I could introduce the ex-member for Willowdale, Mr Gino Matrundola. Welcome.

Interjection.

The Speaker: And of course we all know Bert.

VEHICLE REPAIRS

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): My question today is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Several of my constituents who run auto repair and auto body businesses have recently met with me. They are

concerned that insurance companies are directing customers to preferred or selected auto body shops and in so doing are putting them out of business. They also claim, as a result of this practice, that customers have lost the choice of who can repair their cars and have no guarantee of quality workmanship or parts.

Minister, you are responsible for ensuring that consumers and businesses alike in Ontario are protected from unfair practices. I ask you, what steps are you taking to ensure that consumers are fairly treated?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I'd like to thank the member for Guelph for her question. She's quite right; consumers are concerned in this area. I have met with representatives from the auto glass repair industry and I know that Minister Sampson is working on this issue. I'd also like to acknowledge the efforts of the member for York-Mackenzie for the leadership he is showing on this issue.

When it comes to car repairs, quite often people don't understand what their rights are. Let me assure the member that when car repairs are made, Ontario consumers are well protected under the Motor Vehicle Repair Act. The act requires repair shops to offer a number of things.

First of all, written estimates must be provided upon request. Second, full information about the repair rates must be disclosed: labour rates, cost of parts etc. Repairs must include warranties on new and reconditioned parts for a minimum of 90 days or 5,000 kilometres. The repair cannot exceed the written estimate by more than 10% unless the consumer agrees to further charges.

Under the Business Practices Act, repair shops are forbidden to tell a customer that a certain repair or replacement part is needed if it isn't. Also, they are forbidden to say the parts are new when they aren't.

Let me assure the member that strong measures are in place currently to ensure that consumers are well protected when their cars are being repaired. I know the member for York-Mackenzie is pursuing this to ensure that further measures can be taken to protect consumers and consumer rights and choice in this province.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mrs Elliott: Mr Speaker, I would like to address my supplementary question to Minister Sampson. Minister Sampson, I know you've worked hard to reform auto —

The Speaker: The minister can refer it to the other minister, but you can't direct it. You've got to go back to that minister.

Mrs Elliott: Certainly. Minister Tsubouchi, I know this government has worked hard to reform auto insurance and my constituents are pleased because many of them can already see that their rates are dropping substantially. However, I am told, as I indicated earlier, that insurance companies are referring them to preferred shops for car repair.

Constituents have asked me if they have the choice of taking their car to the auto body shop suggested by their insurance company or if they may choose their own mechanic. I would like to be able to tell my constituents:

Do they have a choice or must they follow the directives of insurance companies?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Refer to the Minister without Portfolio responsible for privatization.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): Indeed, consumers do have choice on who should be servicing their particular vehicle when a damage claim is made. If you think back about the reforms we brought forward in Bill 59, the auto insurance reform, those were clearly designed around opportunities to provide more choice to consumers so that they could not only have the choice on who fixes their car, but far more choice in who they actually buy their premiums from.

I should say that we clearly intend to take a look at the operation of the auto body shop as it relates to insurance product. I'm pleased to say that the auto body industry is looking at a self-regulation process that will ensure that not only do consumers have choice in who they go to to repair their vehicles, but they have confidence in who repairs their vehicles. Clearly, in order to achieve that we will want to have some clear performance guidelines established, and we're working very closely with the industry to do that.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, you made an announcement this morning. I'm somewhat disappointed, and perhaps you are too, that you weren't able to make the announcement here in the House.

It raised many questions that we're looking at and wondering about with the \$60 million funding and how much of that is new money etc. Considering what just took place in BC with \$400 million of investment in recognition of the importance of this whole area, this amount hopefully is just a start.

I must say that I'm personally pleased that you will be reviewing the Mental Health Act. It's been called for by many organizations in Ontario and I'm delighted to see that.

Minister, you said in your announcement: "The initiatives announced today will further strengthen our mental health system to ensure that adequate community and general hospital services are in place before any restructuring is made to our provincial psychiatric hospitals. We will also be taking additional steps in the months ahead."

Minister, will you call for a moratorium on any further closures of psychiatric beds in psychiatric hospitals or in general hospitals?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Yes, this morning I did indeed make an announcement regarding mental health reform and I want to acknowledge the work that was done by the member for Ottawa Centre when he put forward his piece of legislation last year. Certainly we're going to build on that particular piece of legislation.

We have committed today to ensure that the appropriate community services and support are going to be

there for those in the community. As you know, we have already placed a moratorium on the closure of psychiatric beds. That moratorium was imposed by my predecessor, the Honourable Jim Wilson. Until such time as we have the services and the programs that we feel are going to respond to the needs of the individuals in the psychiatric hospitals, there will be no further closure of those beds.

1420

Mr Patten: That's good to hear. In the 1997-98 budget, you allowed for \$728 million in mental health spending, which is approximately 4% of the total budget. Over 72% of that mental health budget was to be spent in institutional care and 28% in community-based services. The goal of the 10-year mental health plan was to have 60% of funding directed to community services and 40% to institutional care. I'm interested to know whether you are still committed to that particular objective.

Dr Garfield, I'm told, this morning said that in terms of the size of your allocation, \$60 million — we don't know if that's all new money or not — indeed about six or seven times that is really required. You said you'll be making additional announcements in the next several months. Will this be part of your announcements, adequate funding for this system, which at the moment you know is in total array, so it will help provide some of the resources so we're not continuing to lose people who work in that area?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Yes, the announcement this morning was in response to the five-week review that had been done by my parliamentary assistant, Mr Newman. He had identified, through the consultations he had had with the stakeholders, the fact that the mental health strategy that had been developed five years ago needed to have some correction.

We recognize that the money this morning, the \$60 million, is simply a first step. There will be future investments. There will be future money provided. I'd also like to emphasize the fact that the \$60 million today is entirely new and additional money so we can ensure that we have the court diversion program, that we have the assertive community treatment teams in place and we have all of the other community supports and services as well.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have a question to the Minister of Health. Last week in this House my leader, Howard Hampton, and I put a question to you about a situation in my riding due to the budget cuts that your government, your ministry, has made to hospitals. We are seeing people released out of those hospitals early and unable in some cases to get services from the community care access centres because of the limits they have on their budgets.

In response to that question, and I read from the Hansard of that date, you said the following: "I think it's extremely important that we at least put some of the facts on the record." You go on to say, "The reality is that the funding for all CCACs has increased."

I've had the opportunity since then to confirm what I suspected: The CCACs in our communities across the Cochrane district, and others across northern Ontario, have not seen any increase to their budgets for programs since your government has come to power. Minister, are you prepared to admit that you were wrong, or will you admit that you have not increased budgets to our community health care system, and are you prepared to put the money where it's needed in the community so that people don't go without services?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I'm going to refer that to the Minister without Portfolio responsible for seniors.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I want to indicate to the member opposite that I was in Cochrane and in fact officiated at the official opening of the newly created coordinated community care access centre in Timmins. At that time, I was pleased to approve their transitional budget and to allow for expansion of access to francophone services within the service delivery matrix in the Timmins CCAC. I met with front-line staff members from Hudson Bay all the way down to Timmins to discuss the service delivery matrix for the north.

I will advise the member that that CCAC is receiving well above the provincial average for support services in this province. The government has been funding areas that have been traditionally underfunded, areas of the province which your government neglected in the five years that you were managing home care in this province.

Mr Bisson: Minister, you can try to spin this any way you want. The reality is that the only increase that the CCAC has seen in our area is money to hire one staff person as a bilingual assistant to the executive director. That's it. It has nothing to do with front-line services. In fact, until just recently, before the cuts you've imposed on the health care budgets of the hospitals, we know there was already an over 10% shortage of services for the community in terms of nursing services.

Your minister said you've increased the budget. The fact is you haven't. Are you prepared today in this House to say that you will put in place the money necessary to offer the services to the people in our communities, not only in Timmins but across northern Ontario, so we have adequate services in our community, and stop stonewalling the people of northern Ontario and other people in this House?

Hon Mr Jackson: First of all, I want to advise the member opposite that this government has increased the amount of community care access support in this province by over \$200 million since we took office. We are providing \$1.2 billion of support in this program, the most accessible program in all of Canada.

I want you to look just within your own caucus. Look at your member from Niagara who, up until this government corrected the inequities your government was prepared to perpetuate — his area was receiving half the level of service of your community in Timmins.

I want to assure the member opposite that this government has made sure we have equitable access to this program across Ontario. The member from Hamilton has received additional moneys; the member from London was on her feet the other day looking for more money; we put \$4 million more into London.

We now have a coordinated, community-based infrastructure that we're very proud of, because we've expanded service to Ontarians, to over 100,000 seniors in the province of Ontario.

MUNICIPAL ELECTION

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. This morning we read in the Toronto Sun that a well-known Liberal Party strategist, Marcel Wieder, has admitted to smearing a former Toronto councillor in a sophisticated dirty tricks campaign during last fall's municipal election. Mr Wieder's dirty tricks involved false allegations that the councillor had taken bribes from a developer. They also involved the use of an Alabama polling firm to conduct a push poll using that false information. What is the minister's view of these dirty tricks and is there anything that can be done to prevent them from happening?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member for Nepean for his question. Obviously, we're all extremely disappointed to see that anybody would use such underhanded and undemocratic processes.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister?

Hon Mr Leach: As I said, we're all very disappointed. Unfortunately, the Municipal Act didn't contemplate such underhanded tactics, and as a result there's very little the province can do to remedy situations such as this. It would also be very difficult to change the legislation to ensure that underhanded tactics such as this don't take place in the future. Hopefully, this type of situation will not occur again, as a result of the civil action that was undertaken.

Mr Baird: I have the May edition of Campaigns and Elections magazine. Inside, on page 25, Marcel Wieder is listed as one of the rising stars of politics in 1998. Campaigns and Elections held an election training school in Washington, DC, a few weeks ago. Is the minister aware whether the person responsible for this municipal dirty tricks campaign is the same Marcel Wieder who led an Ontario Liberal Party delegation to that school?

Interjections.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to know if it is against the rules of this House to lie to the House. Is it against the rules to lie to the House?

The Speaker: Of course it's against the rules. That's your point of order?

Hon Mr Leach: I thank the member for Nepean for conveying that very factual information. I wasn't in Washington, DC, for the training school, but I understand the event was attended by the member for Hamilton East, the member for Windsor-Sandwich, the member for

Windsor-Walkerville and the member for Oakwood, as well as many other Liberal staffers. Perhaps the member for Nepean would like to ask a member of the Liberal Party whether the individual in question is the same one who accompanied them to Washington.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, I'm not debating this. You know the comments you have to withdraw. Either withdraw them or don't; I don't mind.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'll withdraw them.

1430

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I noted the change in tone from the minister. My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. This afternoon we're dealing with Bill 16, which is the fourth major property tax bill that this government has introduced, each bill amending the previous bill. This morning the municipalities told us that because of your bungling and delay it is costing them \$1 million a day in lost revenue and interest costs. The city of London said that your bungling is going to cost them \$800,000. The city of Toronto said your bungling is going to cost them \$10 million. My question is this: Will you reimburse the municipalities the \$1 million a day it is costing them as a result of your bungling this entire property tax reform?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): To the member opposite, obviously we're taking the time to consult with the stakeholders involved. We've already advised the municipalities that actions have been taken to ensure there would be no adverse financial effect on any municipality as a result of this. We're advancing the community reinvestment funds, and other actions are being taken as well by this government to ensure there isn't any undue financial effect on any municipality, none at all. We're ensuring that the stakeholders that have an interest in Bill 16 have an opportunity to put their positions forward so that we can take their advice into consideration and make whatever amendments may be necessary.

Mr Phillips: This is a typical Al Leach bungle. The municipalities are having to lay out millions and millions and millions of dollars. You're going to reimburse them, and they appreciate that, but it's coming out of the same taxpayer. It is as a result of your bungling that they are going to have to pay at least \$80 million in increased costs. It's over \$1 million a day.

You stood here in the Legislature last week and you were going to force the thing through with no amendments. About 10 minutes ago, we got an envelope with 17 government amendments to the bill. We are dealing with the bill at 4 o'clock this afternoon.

I say again, Minister, how much money have you cost the taxpayers by bungling another piece of legislation, in the form of Bill 16? Can you tell the taxpayers if in fact it is a \$1 million a day, because that's what the municipalities have told us.

Hon Mr Leach: Yes, there were amendments made to the bill this afternoon. Those amendments were made as a result of the consultations that were held with the stakeholders who were in to make presentations this morning. I know that the clerks and treasurers themselves recommended four amendments that are being taken into consideration and that will be included in the changes to the act.

Again, with respect to compensating the municipalities for any lost revenues, actions have already been taken previously to ensure that any loss of revenue, as a result of the assessment roll being delayed for whatever purpose, would be taken care of. We've committed to that and the municipalities know that. I don't know why they would have any concerns whatsoever with this process other than to feel comforted that we've taken all their concerns into consideration and have made the appropriate changes to the bill.

SAULT STE MARIE ECONOMY

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Premier. My community, Sault Ste Marie, is experiencing some really difficult fiscal and economic challenges. Our unemployment rate is the highest in the province, probably double the provincial average, our property taxes are set to rise by a reported 11% to 12% and people are leaving at a troubling rate, some of them our brightest and most highly motivated.

The provincial economy may be hitting on all cylinders. However, in my community we're not feeling it. In the early 1990s, when Sault Ste Marie was in trouble, the provincial government was there as a partner, giving leadership, offering a hand up. My question today is: Where is your government in these difficult times for Sault Ste Marie? What leadership are you willing to give? Will you personally come to Sault Ste Marie and talk to us about these very disturbing trends happening today?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the Minister of Northern Development —

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Thank you for the question from the member of the opposition. As you know, we just got off the phone about half an hour ago. I'm going to be in Sault Ste Marie on Friday, meeting with the mayor, and I've invited you and your colleague to join me at that meeting. This government takes very seriously the challenges that face Sault Ste Marie. That's why the heritage fund has made so many announcements in the last couple of years to try to diversify and help that local economy.

Are there enough jobs presently? No, we want to see more jobs. That's why the whole agenda of this government has been to promote growth and economic opportunity for all the province, including Sault Ste Marie. I look forward to that meeting we're going to have on Friday.

Mr Martin: I appreciate the fact that the minister is going to come to the Sault. I wish the Premier would

come, because he's the guy who actually writes the cheques and makes the decisions. Your track record is not good. The biggest hit to our economy in the last three years has been from the cuts in jobs and services delivered directly by your government; for example, the downsizing of the lottery corporation. Plus, it seems that any job that's left in northern Ontario these days is being magically moved to North Bay to shore up the Premier's political fortunes.

In Sault Ste Marie, we were just sent on a wild goose chase after some jobs that were negotiated through the Bombardier agreement that was made that mysteriously and magically ended up — where else? — in North Bay. The NOHFC, which was set up by a previous Conservative government to help northern Ontario communities, is similar to this kind of situation. Previous governments spent, on average, \$30 million a year on northern Ontario. Your government said it was putting \$120 million into the pot, plus \$30 million per year thereafter. That would be \$210 million. Our records show that you spent at most \$40 million of that money. Where is the rest of the money? Will you be willing to spend the significant, serious amounts of money that are needed to help —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, member for Sault Ste Marie.

1440

Hon Mr Hodgson: We're going to be meeting on Friday with the mayor. The purpose of that meeting is to have a constructive dialogue on how to improve the situation in Sault Ste Marie and the Algoma area.

If he's not satisfied with that, if he wants to stand up and make speeches about other things, that's fine. Tell me that when we're talking on the phone.

We're trying to be helpful in this situation. We recognize the situation and we want to improve it. In fact, the heritage fund has spent \$8 million in the Algoma area since 1996 — \$5.7 million towards the Sault locks, \$1.6 million to the Canadian Bushplane Heritage Centre, \$187,500 —

Mr Martin: What a bunch of bullshit.

The Speaker: Member for Sault Ste Marie.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Just hold on. Member for Sault Ste Marie, I'm standing. You're not standing. I ask you to take your seat. Member for Sault Ste Marie, the minister has the floor. You cannot stand up and heckle at him. You're out of order. If you have a point of order, I'll be happy to hear it. Otherwise, remain in your seat. Minister.

Hon Mr Hodgson: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. We're going to be meeting on Friday and I can outline this in more detail to you, but this government is quite concerned. The Minister of the Environment has just announced \$40 million in sewage and water upgrades. There's heritage fund money. We've put back the \$60 million that your party took out of the heritage fund that was directed — stolen right from the people of northern —

Mr Martin: You have spent a total of \$40 million.

The Speaker: Member for Sault Ste Marie, I'm not warning you again. I'm going to name the member for

Sault Ste Marie. Take your seat. I'm not warning you any more.

On a point of order, the member for Lake Nipigon.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Article 23(b) of the standing orders —

The Speaker: Article 23(b) has nothing to do with what we're debating right now, absolutely nothing. Please take your seat. Monsieur, s'il vous plaît, there's no new point of order. You find the order, you quote me the order.

Minister, are you done? Thank you. New question, member for Simcoe East.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): My question is for the Minister of Health. Today the government made an announcement regarding access to mental health services. This is a very important issue in my riding of Simcoe East. Could the minister please inform the House what steps this government is taking to improve access to Ontario's mental health system.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): As I have indicated, today we had the pleasure of making an announcement regarding mental health reform. This was in response to the consultative review that had been undertaken by my parliamentary assistant, Dan Newman. He consulted with hundreds of stakeholders and certainly received a tremendous amount of correspondence. As a result of this, we are taking steps to make sure we put in place the appropriate community supports, particularly as we're going through a time of transition, so there will be sixty million new dollars that will be provided for new community services and programs.

Mr McLean: Minister, I know a lot of hard work and consultation went into preparing the report, 2000 and Beyond. Could the minister explain what the next step will be and guarantee the House that those involved in the formation of the report will continue to participate in our mental health reform initiatives?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Yes, I think the fact that the recommendations were so well received is because we had the benefit of having had many discussions and a tremendous amount of input from the provincial committee and certainly other stakeholders who are very keenly interested in the issue of mental health reform.

It is certainly our plan that as we set about the task of determining the parameters for review of mental health legislation, as we set about the task of educating individuals in this province about the purpose and the content of the Mental Health Act, we would continue to involve all of those stakeholders. As we move forward and we put further steps in place in order to ensure that we have an integrated and comprehensive system of mental health services, those people will all be involved in the process.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): This is to the Minister of Health. Your Health Services Restructuring

Commission's decisions in Ottawa-Carleton have made the mistake of putting all of its eggs in one basket. By closing the Grace and Riverside hospitals, downsizing St Vincent's and the Montfort, and in particular cutting high-intensity care facilities from the Civic and the General hospitals to just one hospital — less than what London, Ontario, has — you are overloading the remaining facilities and putting the health of 720,000 residents in Ottawa-Carleton at risk.

Minister, experts in our community say the loss of high-intensity services at the Civic is both unwarranted and dangerous, that there's no justification that Ottawa should be the only major North American city with only one full-service hospital. Will you not listen to them and review this ill-advised decision?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): As you know, the Health Services Restructuring Commission did make recommendations, and we are now at a point where we are implementing the directives that have been issued. We are going to continue to work with all of the hospitals, the boards and the CEOs to ensure that all of the services that are necessary will be provided to people in the Ottawa community.

Mr Cullen: Minister, the problem is getting worse, not better, as a result of your policies. Your health care restructuring exercise will cost Ottawa-Carleton ratepayers \$47 million in additional costs, yet today we learn that the Ottawa Hospital is facing a deficit of \$36 million as a result of increases in health demands and your cuts to hospitals.

Will you commit today, Minister, to restoring those cuts and providing the funds to eliminate this deficit?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think we've discussed this situation before. As you well know, when your government was in office, there were hospitals that ran deficits; in fact, under the NDP, hospitals ran deficits.

The policy has always been the same: When hospitals are in deficit positions, as hospitals are from time to time, as they were when you were there, it is up to Ministry of Health staff to sit down with the individual hospital concerned to review their operating plan and to determine what type of recovery plan can be developed in order to ensure they can respond to the services that need to be provided and also deal with that deficit situation. That has always worked well in the past and I believe it will work well in the future.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is to the Minister of Health. I understood you to say a few moments ago that the entire \$60 million that you announced today for mental health reform was new money, and I find that peculiar. I'll give you a couple of examples.

The \$11.8 million that you announced today for ACT teams was previously announced and the money wasn't flowed. That previous announcement was \$16 million.

The \$21.7 million total that you've announced as being in the community development fund used to be \$23.5

million and was announced before. All you've announced is \$1.7 million additional.

The one-time allocation of \$1 million for long-term-care services, for psychogeriatric staff to learn how to deal with that, doesn't include any additional staff. It just includes training for the ones who are there.

Those are just a few examples.

Can you clarify for us what is new money and what is old money that has already been announced, or are you counting as new money what you've announced but haven't flowed?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I think the announcement today certainly was in very sharp contrast to what you did when you were in office. As you know, the NDP actually removed \$60 million from the psychiatric facilities without making any community reinvestment whatsoever. You also cut 10% of Metro's psychiatric beds during that time period.

The money that we have announced today is new money. It is not a reinvestment of money coming out of the psychiatric hospitals. This is new and additional money that we are going to be investing in mental health services, and we will continue to invest additional money because for us the delivery of mental health services in a comprehensive and integrated manner is very, very important.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Just for the members' interest, 23(b) is the rule that governs debate. We were in question period.

1450

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontarians are gravely concerned with the historic \$1.3-billion cut to base funding of hospitals; and

"Whereas Ontarians feel that health services are suffering; and

"Whereas the government is reducing hospital funding and not reinvesting millions of dollars into the communities that they are being taken away from;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Conservative government to stop the cuts to base funding for hospitals across Ontario and to ensure that community services are in place before the removal of hospital services. The Conservative government must fund hospitals with a funding formula that reflects demographic and regional needs. The Conservative government must ensure that health services are available, including emergency and urgent care, to all Ontarians."

I affix my signature.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH CLINICS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition signed by over 1,000 workers from all across the province. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc (OHCOW) provide high-quality professional medical, hygiene and ergonomic services to employers, workers, joint health and safety committees and their communities;

"Whereas the professional services that the Ministry of Labour once provided are being offloaded to organizations such as the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers, increasing the demand for the services provided by OHCOW;

"Whereas the professional and technical expertise and advice provided by OHCOW have made a significant contribution to improvements to workplace health and safety as well as the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call upon the government to maintain the funding of the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers and oppose any attempt to alter the governance structure or erode the professional and technical services" of these clinics.

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers be provided with the necessary funds to allow expansion into other Ontario communities in order to provide the professional and technical services needed to reduce occupational injuries, illnesses and deaths."

On behalf of my NDP colleagues, I add my name to those of these petitioners.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): I have a petition presented to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

This is signed by hundreds of constituents in High Park-Swansea, and I affix my signature.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): In the government members' gallery we have Mr Bob Eaton, a previous member for Middlesex. Welcome, sir.

ABORTION

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition that was signed by over 300 residents of the Cornwall area, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury, or illness, and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is hazardous to women's health;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

I have also signed my name.

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 220 people.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness, and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health;

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ottawa-Carleton Restructuring Advisory Group has prepared a preliminary report for the Ottawa-Carleton Developmental Services Restructuring Project; and

"Whereas the consultation process was selective and limited; and

"Whereas those who require services are being pitted against those who have services; and

"Whereas service to one group should not be at the expense of another, regardless of age or language; and

"Whereas the MCSS 'corporate agenda' is one of wholesale destruction of the support system for the vulnerable; and

"Whereas this corporate agenda will threaten the health, safety and likely the lives of many disabled people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to stop this destructive restructuring project and provide adequate funding for quality services to the developmentally disabled."

I affix my signature to this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition forwarded to me by Wayne Samuelson, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas approximately 300 workers are killed on the job each year and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario continues to allow a massive erosion of WCB prevention funding; and

"Whereas Ontario workers are fearful that the government of Ontario, through its recent initiatives, is threatening to dismantle workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have consistently provided a meaningful role for labour within the health and safety prevention system; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have proven to be the most cost-effective prevention organizations funded by the WCB;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cease the assault on the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Further, we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that the workers' clinics

and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre remain labour-driven organizations with full and equitable WCB funding and that the WCB provide adequate prevention funding to eliminate workplace illness, injury and death."

I proudly add my name to theirs.

1500

KIDNEY DIALYSIS

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): This petition speaks for the patients and community supporters of a full-service, in-hospital dialysis unit in Smiths Falls. It expresses the urgent and deep concern over the fact that this proposal may not be approved.

"Whereas the communities of Perth and Smiths Falls were encouraged by the provincial government to raise funds in support of a dialysis unit being placed in their communities and the communities of eastern Ontario fully supported the request by raising funds; and

"Whereas the Kingston General Hospital staff were willing to train staff for the unit; and

"Whereas the Perth-Smiths Falls area is the ideal location geographically for accessibility to the largest number of patients from a 50 nautical mile radius; and

"Whereas people are our country's most precious resource in any given area; and

"Whereas we have been informed that the health ministry is considering placing a dialysis unit in Brockville managed by a private company from outside this area;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, do hereby strongly object to the placement of a private unit in Brockville only, where there is no public hands-on control. We consider this an urgent matter requiring prompt legislative action to ensure a dialysis unit is placed at the Smiths Falls north unit under the jurisdiction of the Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital."

This petition is signed by over 1,054, and I affix my signature in support of this effort.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition in regard to Toronto tenants. It's addressed to the Ontario Parliament and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the government has brought forth Bill 96, legislation which will effectively kill rent control in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris campaign literature during the York South by-election stated that rent control will continue; and

"Whereas tenant groups, students and seniors have pointed out that this legislation will hurt those who can least afford it, as it will cause higher rents across most markets in Ontario; and

"Whereas this Harris proposal will make it easier for residents to be evicted from retirement care homes; and

"Whereas the Liberal caucus continues to believe that all tenants, and particularly the vulnerable in our society

who live on fixed incomes, deserve the assurance of a maximum rent cap;

"We, the undersigned, therefore demand that the Mike Harris government scrap its proposal to abandon and eliminate rent control and introduce legislation which will protect tenants in the province of Ontario."

Since I agree, I'm affixing my signature to this document.

FIRE IN HAMILTON

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Lest the government forget, we still want a public inquiry into the Plastimet fire. I have a further petition.

"Whereas a fire at a PVC plastic vinyl plant located in the middle of one of Hamilton's residential areas burned for three days; and

"Whereas the city of Hamilton declared a state of emergency and called for a limited voluntary evacuation of several blocks around the site; and

"Whereas the burning of PVC results in the formation and release of toxic substances such as dioxins, as well as large quantities of heavy metals and other dangerous chemicals;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold a full public inquiry into the Hamilton Plastimet fire; and

"Further, we, the undersigned, request that the Ministry of the Environment and the government of Ontario take responsibility for the immediate cleanup of the fire site."

I add my name to those of my constituents.

PAROLE SYSTEM

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): "Whereas the Ontario Progressive Conservative government has passed a resolution urging the government of Canada to repeal section 745 of the Criminal Code of Canada to ensure that convicted murderers serve their entire sentences; and

"Whereas convicted first-degree murderers are allowed to apply to the court for a reduction of their parole ineligibility period; and

"Whereas victims' families must relive the horrors of the original crime through a jury hearing for this early parole and relive this every time the killer is given rehearings for early parole; and

"Whereas the provincial government must bear a large degree of the costs involved with jury hearings;

"We, the undersigned, ask the Attorney General of Ontario to request the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to reconsider his decision under Bill C-45 and to repeal section 745 of the Criminal Code of Canada."

I affix my signature to this petition.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): This petition is on red light cameras.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas red light cameras can dramatically assist in reducing the number of injuries and deaths resulting from red light runners; and

"Whereas red light cameras only take pictures of licence plates, thus reducing privacy concerns; and

"Whereas all revenues from violations can be easily directed to a designated fund to improve safety at high-collision intersections; and

"Whereas there is a growing disregard for traffic laws resulting in serious injury to pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and especially children and seniors; and

"Whereas this provincial government has endorsed the use of a similar camera system to collect tolls on the new 407 tollway; and

"Whereas mayors and concerned citizens across Ontario have been seeking permission to deploy these cameras due to limited police resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario support the installation of red light cameras at high-collision intersections to monitor and prosecute motorists who run red lights."

I agree with this petition and I affix my name to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): The member for Durham East.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I'm speechless here. In fact, I can't find my speech.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Niagara South.

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you, member for Durham East.

I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of the member for Durham West, the Minister of Community and Social Services. In keeping with the spirit of the rules, I'll summarize the petition. It deals with increased OHIP funding on behalf of chiropractic services.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAX CUTS FOR PEOPLE AND FOR SMALL BUSINESS ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES IMPÔTS DES PARTICULIERS ET DES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 15, An Act to cut taxes for people and for small business and to implement other measures contained in the 1998 Budget / Projet de loi 15, Loi visant à réduire les impôts des particuliers et des petites entreprises et à mettre en oeuvre d'autres mesures contenues dans le budget de 1998.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): There was an agreement yesterday, and I have to put the question.

All those in favour of second reading of Bill 15, please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1506 to 1511.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Amott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bassett, Isabel
Boushy, Dave
Brown, Jim
Chudleigh, Ted
Clement, Tony
Doyle, Ed
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Fisher, Barbara
Flaherty, Jim
Ford, Douglas B.
Froese, Tom
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Grimmett, Bill
Guzzo, Garry J.

Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael D.
Hodgson, Chris
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Johnson, David
Jordan, W. Leo
Klees, Frank
Leach, Al
Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
McLean, Allan K.
Munro, Julia
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettit, Trevor
Rollins, E.J. Douglas

Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Saunderson, William
Shea, Derwyn
Sheehan, Frank
Skarica, Toni
Smith, Bruce
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tilson, David
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Villeneuve, Noble
Wilson, Jim
Wood, Bob
Young, Terence H.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles
Boyd, Marion
Bradley, James J.
Christopherson, David
Cleary, John C.
Colle, Mike
Conway, Sean G.

Duncan, Dwight
Grandmaître, Bernard
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Kormos, Peter
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley

Martin, Tony
Miclash, Frank
Phillips, Gerry
Pouliot, Gilles
Pupatello, Sandra
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Silipo, Tony

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 55; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried. According to the order of the House of June 2, this bill is referred to the standing committee on administration of justice.

PARTNERSHIPS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1998 LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES SOCIÉTÉS EN NOM COLLECTIF

Mr Tsubouchi moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to amend the law with respect to Partnerships / Projet de loi 6, Loi visant à modifier des lois en ce qui concerne les sociétés en nom collectif.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Mr Speaker, I am sharing

my time with the members for Huron and Wentworth North. I'm happy to present for third reading Bill 6. This bill will bring complementary amendments to three provincial statutes —

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): There are too many conversations going on. Minister.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

As I was saying, this bill will bring complementary amendments to three provincial statutes, the Partnerships Act, the Business Names Act and the Chartered Accountants Act, 1956.

I would like to remind members why we need Bill 6. I would also like to talk a bit about the possible next steps and then leave my colleagues some time to discuss the various aspects of the bill.

Limited liability partnerships protect the personal assets of professionals from legal actions taken against their partners, or employees supervised by their partners, who fail to perform their duties properly.

Most US jurisdictions already have laws like those in the bill we're considering. With this legislation, Ontario has an opportunity to be a leader among Canadian jurisdictions, the first to legally recognize limited liability partnerships.

Our government has taken a careful, measured approach to this matter. We are quite comfortable with the bill which has emerged from debate both in the House and in committee. It reflects our view that our key responsibility is to create a modern and flexible regulatory environment that serves the realities of today's business while at the same time protecting the interests of consumers.

Right now, only chartered accountants would qualify to form limited liability partnerships, or LLPs, under this bill. They are the only group that has so far demonstrated the need for this type of protection. That does not mean, of course, they will necessarily be the only group that ever qualifies to establish limited liability partnerships.

The bill also contains the flexibility to extend LLP status to other groups that meet certain requirements. We will take those matters up with those groups involved on a case-by-case basis. Of course, any decision to include any profession in the future must balance the needs of businesses and individuals and the rights of consumers, who must continue to have confidence in the professionals they hire.

We want to do whatever we can to establish a business climate in Ontario that leads to prosperity while protecting consumers. It is a personal goal of mine, and I know it's one that the Premier and my other colleagues share, to achieve the delicate balance which this bill does so well.

As I said when this bill came before the House for second reading, it's all about trying to provide some fairness in a partnership situation. Negligent partners and their firms will continue to be liable for their own actions, but no longer will their partners' personal assets be at risk. However, where there has been fraud or an allegation of fraud, the existing liability rules will still apply. At the same time, consumers will continue to have the protection

they need in their business dealings with these professionals.

As I'm sure you know, Mr Speaker, Premier Harris committed during the last provincial election to enact tax-neutral legislation that would give chartered accountants the right to form limited liability partnerships, while protecting the rights of consumers.

I believe with this legislation we've done two notable things. First, we have honoured our commitment to bring forward a bill that will address this important issue and furthers our goals of fostering a modern economy that supports job creation and prosperity for people. Second, and equally important, we have struck the right balance, I believe, of fairness and consumer protection.

In closing, I'd like to acknowledge the role of the member for Hamilton West, my parliamentary assistant. I would also like to thank members from all three parties who have voiced their support for this bill. I appreciate the opportunity to address this bill one last time and look forward to the continued support of all members on this important initiative.

1520

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): Today I've been asked to speak about limited liability partnerships. I think it's important for everyone in the House to recognize that we're trying to balance here and to ensure that consumer protection is foremost in people's minds. In this bill, it is not the government's intent to allow the chartered accountant profession or any profession to not take responsibility for their actions. We've been very intent on that as a government as we've looked at limited liability partnerships.

What happens is that in many cases two or three people come together and form a partnership that allows them to work together. The accountants of Ontario and across the world have done that in very many different ways. When I was much younger, I articulated with an accounting firm called Deloitte, Haskins and Sells at that point. What happened was that a number of people came together to form a partnership to provide accounting services for people in Ontario, and at that time in Toronto.

What has happened since that time is that accounting firms especially have got much bigger and they have formed world partnerships. Deloitte, Haskins and Sells I believe now is Deloitte Touche, and it may have even changed its name since then; I'm not sure. They have formed world partnerships where they deal in strategic deals that may happen throughout the world. What happens is that a partner in Ontario may do a small portion of a deal where a partner in the US is doing another portion of a deal etc, and you're dealing with partners you may not have known as we knew them when it was smaller firms.

This bill is saying: "Is there a liability for the partner who works on the deal? You bet your bottom dollar there's a liability. There is a liability for that person." But what they're saying is that for the partner that doesn't work on the deal, the assets of the partnership are there for the taking if something goes wrong, the assets of the

partner who works on the deal are there if something goes wrong. But, in the long run, in general partnership a partner of a limited liability partnership is not personally liable for partnership debts and obligations arising from the negligence of another partner or an employee supervised by another partner. I think we are making sure that the consumer is protected in this issue.

One of the concerns I had when I first heard we were looking at limited partnership was, and I know all three parties would have this same concern, how are the people going to know that these are limited liability partnerships? How am I, as just a consumer going in to my local accounting firm, going to be sure that I am protected if there is an accountant who acts in an unfair manner?

I feel confident that a number of protections have been implemented. The first one that I think is important — and for some of us who know the accounting business, we would recognize this immediately — is that the limited liability partnership is going to have to be included in the name, so people who are more informed about the accounting profession will recognize that there's a limited liability partnership name there that you will be able to recognize.

For those of us who may not be as informed about partnerships or may not be as informed about the chartered accountants of the world, these accountants will also have to carry liability, some kind of insurance, so they have the ability to be there if something happens. In the case of negligence, this partner will have to put forward his or her assets and the partnership itself will have to put forward their assets, and so there will be protection for the consumer who uses an accounting firm and is therefore in any way damaged.

To restate this, the governing legislation will be amended to permit limited liability partnerships to practise in the profession. Professionals' governing bodies must establish mandatory minimum insurance coverage, which I think is very important. So we will know the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario will be responsible to make sure there's insurance coverage for every professional who is practising, and the LLP name must be registered under the business act. So an LLP must identify itself as a limited liability partnership by including the words "limited liability partnership" in the name. If they are not a firm from Ontario, there are certain requirements they must also have in that case.

I feel that in giving the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario this huge responsibility, we are ensuring that the consumer is protected. We're also ensuring that the chartered accountants of Ontario are able to carry on business in a global economy. They'll be able to compete in world deals or world transactions, if you will, and they'll be able to be protected from partners who may not be acting in the same light.

It's my understanding, and we will see in a few minutes, that the other parties agree with this limited liability partnership, but I want to raise a couple of concerns I have from what the minister said about further groups coming

forward with limited liability in a limited liability partnership.

I think we all have to be very concerned in this House about who receives limited liability partnerships. I think with the chartered accountants of Ontario and the chartered accountants in the world, what we have is a group that is dealing with a very highly informed group of clients. I think we have to make sure the consumer is always cognizant of the fact that their liability is in some way limited. I think it's important, as lawyers think about this, as certified general accountants think about this, as different professional groups think about this alternative, that they think about the best interests of the consumer in this field.

The government is not there to ensure that consumers in some way can have their liability limited. It's there to ensure what happens is that everybody is treated very fairly. I believe, after reading this bill, that is happening. I think it's a good opportunity for the accountants, especially the Institute of Chartered Accountants — I know some of the members have worked very hard with the institute — to prove themselves as they start to make sure that insurance coverage is adequate for their members, as they ensure that the consumers are well protected. I know they will do that because I have a great amount of respect for them, and I look forward to limited liability partnerships with accounting being viewed as a very positive thing by consumers in Ontario.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): I want to thank the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations for allowing me to speak on this matter. I think the public would have a concern regarding this matter, and that is, how are we going to be protected if this goes through? The answer is quite simple: They would be protected. They would still be allowed to sue the accountant who was negligent, they would still be allowed to go against the assets of the partnership firm and they would still, in all likelihood, be able to gain substantial sums in a lawsuit due to the amount of insurance coverage the accounting firm would have.

The present situation is unfair to the accountant, the hardworking, responsible, competent professional who engages in his profession flawlessly and one day finds out, through no fault of his own, that a partner of his has been acting in a way that is irresponsible, in fact negligent. What would happen under the present situation is, that partner would be sued, and if he lost the lawsuit, then the innocent partner, through no fault of his own, even though he did nothing wrong, would find that his assets would be gone. His family would find that perhaps their home would be removed and yet none of them was at fault in any way. That's quite unfair to the innocent partner.

This legislation strikes a balance. It protects the member of the public who has been defrauded. It still allows him to pursue lawsuits against the parties that are responsible. In fact, it still allows him to go against the assets of the partnership firm, and in almost every instance there will be substantial insurance available to cover any losses to the afflicted individual.

1530

At the same time, it protects the professional who through no fault of his own finds himself with a partner who has acted in a negligent fashion. So it strikes a balance between allowing professionals to compete and perform in the global economy on the one hand, and on the other hand it still provides plenty of redress for anyone who may find themselves afflicted by the negligent conduct of an accountant.

With reference to other jurisdictions, this type of legislation already exists in 51 US states. This has been the situation since approximately 1991 and there has been no undue hardship to the public affected in America.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Which is the 51st?

Mr Skarica: That's a good question.

There are no Canadian jurisdictions that recognize limited liability partnerships at the present time, but so what? A number of provinces have expressed interest in adopting this legislation, and what this does is make Ontario a leader in this area, and that's nothing to be discouraged by and nothing to be ashamed of, in conformance with this government's practice to bring our economic practices and our regulation into the 1990s to allow professionals and businesses, both small and large, to compete in the growing global economy.

There's been a move both in accountant firms and in law firms and in many other professional firms and in businesses to expand into other locales and to other provinces and to other countries. This type of legislation will enable Canadian firms to better grow into those other states, other provinces, other countries and will allow us to enter the 1990s, and allow initially chartered accountant firms but eventually other professional firms, to compete and be members of the global economy.

It is my understanding that initially this legislation will apply to chartered accountants, but also it'll lead the way and pave the way for other professional agencies to avail themselves of these types of partnerships. It's anticipated that other professions, including law firms, will eventually examine this option for themselves, and subject to review by government policy and subject to whether it's appropriate to both the profession and the public so that they are protected, it's anticipated that these types of partnerships will expand into other areas and again allow those professions to compete in the global economy.

Those professions watching today may ask themselves, "How are limited liability partnerships formed?" The simple answer is that they will be formed by a written agreement between the partners in much the same way as those partnership agreements would be written at the present time. For those who already have partnership agreements, they can be converted into a limited liability partnership by simply amending the partnership agreement. The partners would remain fully liable for all partnership debts and liabilities before converting to a limited liability partnership.

For those people initially in the accounting firms and eventually other professions who are watching and are

asking, "What requirements must be satisfied before limited liability partnerships can carry on business in Ontario?" they are actually quite simple. There are three of them, basically: Governing legislation must be amended to permit LLPs, limited liability partnerships, to practise the profession; there must be a professional governing body which would establish mandatory minimum insurance coverage — that requirement is there obviously to protect the public; and limited liability partnerships must register their names under the Business Names Act.

The limited liability partnership must identify itself as a limited liability partnership by including the words "limited liability partnership" in its name, and that will give adequate and fair notice to the public that they are dealing with a partnership that doesn't have as broad a coverage, assetwise, as a normal partnership. But as indicated, in virtually every instance it would have absolutely no impact on the community and on the customers of the accounting firm, as there would be insurance and the assets of both the individual who is negligent and the firm would be available for payment for any liability.

A limited liability partnership, including extra-provincial limited liability partnership, must carry on business only under its registered firm name.

To conclude, what this legislation does, as does much of the legislation that this government has brought forward, is it brings initially the accounting profession but eventually other professions into the 1990s. It allows those partnerships to expand their business base. It allows for greater flexibility to expand into other markets. Basically, it updates the ability of chartered accountant firms, many of which are here and have tremendous reputations, to compete worldwide with other firms.

I'm proud to speak today on this legislation. It's just another indication that our government is looking forward into the future, not into the past, and it's a credit to the minister that he had the foresight and the determination to bring this legislation forward even though we have a busy agenda.

It's interesting to note that the other parties are supporting it and in fact have supported it for some time, but it was our government that brought this legislation forward. I would like to commend the minister for bringing this legislation forward. It will help not only the community but the professionals involved. It will assist Ontario's economy in a small dimension initially, but yet another dimension where we are bringing Ontario and Ontario's economy and the business people involved into the next millennium armed and equipped with the tools necessary to compete both locally and globally while at the same time protecting the public so they're not prejudiced in any fashion.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Pouliot: Our party will be supporting what is in front of us. Indeed, we feel that it is most commonsensical. It makes immense sense.

I do find a certain irony that we have a person from the government of the day in the person of Mr Skarica — I admire Mr Skarica, a crown attorney who comes with a

track record of 17 years, a member of that most honourable of professions, the law profession. One would expect, candidly, that the law profession would be somewhat reluctant to give away a bit of what they've considered traditionally a fiefdom.

I commend the government. It's not often I have the opportunity to do this. In this instance they have shown relative courage. It is overdue. It strikes a balance. In seeking equilibrium, they have achieved their goal. Suffice it to say I don't make it a habit to commend the government on their wisdom, but in this case, in all fairness, they've listened well and they are to be commended. I will leave my comments at that.

In terms of my good friend and colleague Toni Skarica, I want to ask you, with high respect, who got to you? It is not in your makeup. You have been most consistent in the past. Now we find him not to be a maverick, a member of the fifth column, but so readily acquiescing in anything that M. Harris and his government say. Be careful, Toni.

The Acting Speaker: Who is going to reply? Does anybody wish to reply? If not, further debate.

1540

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): As the consumer affairs critic, I was involved with some of the discussions with the minister and his staff in terms of what this bill meant to the profession of chartered accountants and to the public. They've been quite cooperative in giving us information.

A lot of aspects of the bill are ones that our former consumer affairs critic, Bruce Crozier, was in favour of. He thought the basic thrust of the bill and the bill itself was a positive one and something our party should support. I've continued to work towards getting this bill brought to this point, and I think it should proceed.

The bill itself perhaps will be one of other similar-type bills that may come forward. As you know, this is an enabling piece of legislation which deals specifically with members of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants. It is exclusive in terms of their abilities and their powers and their liabilities. It is not referring to any other professions, as the member for Lake Nipigon said.

There has been some controversy, not so much about the bill per se, but in a wider perspective. If you've been listening to the radio broadcasts over the last couple of weeks, there seem to be a lot of ads from the CGAs, the certified general accountants. They've been upset with parts of this bill. I guess they want to be included. They're also complaining about other restrictions they have on the way they can practise in the province. I think that's part of a bigger issue that perhaps this Legislature will deal with down the line.

In general, one of the things that comes to my mind, one of the questions that people have raised with me, is in terms of the understanding the public has about what the difference is between a CA, a CGA and a CMA. Perhaps in the business community they understand the difference, but I don't think the general public at this point has enough information to understand the intricacies of some of the complaints that some of the CGAs have had.

I hope the government moves, through its ministry, to bring forth information so that the public will have a better awareness of accountancy and the divisions there are in this professional field. I think that would be very helpful in ensuring that when this Legislature is faced with perhaps other professions coming forward in terms of getting the same type of protection, the public is informed in terms of the impact of this type of legislation that might be asked for by the CGAs or that, as the member for Lake Nipigon said, maybe the legal profession would ask for. I would hope if that were done that we would limit some of the controversy over these points of argument that have been made. It's been very prevalent on the radio in the last couple of weeks, and I think there have even been some print ads on it.

One thing that I'm concerned about as consumer affairs critic is, how does this impact on the citizens of Ontario who require the services of chartered accountancy from the firms and individuals who are chartered accountants? In examining this bill and being involved in the brief hearings we had, the main thing here is that there is a threat of increased litigation costs which may be brought to the whole arena of accountancy because of the close relationship we have with the United States. As you know, in the United States there has been a tradition of litigation frenzy, certainly in the medical profession and other professions. The fear some of the Canadian firms and some of the accountants in Canada had was that this type of litigation feeding frenzy might be something that would perhaps cross the border.

As you know, what that does is it really increases the insurance costs for professionals who have to operate and do business in Ontario. You know what it has done in the United States, where it's not unusual for doctors and lawyers — ironically it's not lawyers so much; doctors have to pay premiums that are just exorbitant to get malpractice insurance, for instance. As you know, those costs, which sometimes can be \$1 million you have to pay to essentially be protected against malpractice in the United States as a medical doctor, will eventually have to be borne in the costs to the consumer, who has to pay for those services. That's where excessive litigation ends up costing the taxpayer, ends up costing the consumer and ends up making it difficult for small business to operate too, because you have to get bigger and bigger to make yourself immune to this type of litigation.

That's the concern of the CA professionals in Canada, the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants. They felt this was a very real fear that would cause all kinds of litigation because, as you know, at the present time, you who may be a member of a chartered accountancy firm may be sued, even though you did not have anything to do with the file or the case that is before the courts. In fact, your personal assets as a member of that firm or that partnership could be seized as a result of court action. Even though there may be, who knows how, many members of a firm, you, as an individual who had nothing to do with a particular client, could lose everything, from your home to your car and other personal possessions. I

don't think that is a fair practice, whereby a person would be living under that kind of a threat.

Certainly, it is a very real threat, that does happen now under the present set of rules and laws that we have in this province. That is why in the United States of America, where there is a lot of litigation, a lot of suits being brought, almost every state has this limited liability partnership. It basically limits the liability of partners who are not involved in those particular files. I think the public understands that this is an equitable and very rationed position to take. In the long run the public will benefit if there is a limited liability, in that the cost of doing business and the cost of going to an accountant, a CA in this case, will not have to also incorporate those potential insurance costs and liability costs.

I know that the CAs all across Ontario must just be smiling from ear to ear. A lot of them deal with taxation, and one of the biggest boons to their businesses is going to be property taxation. This government is just about to pass the most complicated property tax laws in North America. You're going to have to be a CA to understand property tax law in this province. There are five pieces of legislation that this government is going to introduce in their property tax laws. It is going to be almost impossible for a normal citizen to understand how property taxation works in this province.

As we stand here today, the government, at the last minute, has just introduced 17 amendments to the five previous laws they passed. This is the type of thing that the public may have to go to CAs for, or they're going to have to get help on it, because you're going to have to be either a Bay Street or Philadelphia lawyer to understand property taxation, never mind income tax and corporate taxation, in this country or this province. That is the thing I fear this government should be addressing also in a more macro way: making the public laws, especially that deal with taxation and laws that deal with business, simpler. This government in this instance at least is trying to do something that's positive. I think the minister of consumer affairs at least understands that and he has been doing it. What I fear is what the Minister of Finance, on the other hand, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs are bringing about: just an unbelievable avalanche of complex consumer tax laws that deal with especially property taxes and business taxes.

1550

If you talk to small business people about the removal of this business occupancy tax and the confusion that's going to cause and is causing with landlords and tenants, there has been mayhem across this province over the last three months trying to figure out what kind of implications there are with this tax law. I'm sure the CA firms across Ontario have been having their phones ring off the hook, trying to get them to explain what the new implications of these tax laws are.

If CAs give certain advice — and I think that's where it comes into liability — they have to be cognizant of the fact that if they give the wrong advice, they could be subject to some kind of legal action. In the case of

property tax law that is being introduced by this government, I'll tell you, the CAs need this kind of legislation. They're going to need it desperately, because I wonder if the CAs can figure out what property tax law is now in this province.

As you know, this government said, "We're going to update all these new tax laws on properties because we need a market value system," and then what do they go around and do? All of a sudden, halfway through they said, "Oh, by the way, we're freezing everything back on the pre-1997 value." So we've got two sets of books now. We've got a frozen 1997 value system for commercial, because it was totally screwed up, fouled up, and then we've got one post-1997 for residential.

The CAs of this province will need this type of protection to deal with property taxation alone, never mind corporate taxation intricacies and business taxation and so forth. This is one area where the public may benefit, and certainly the professionals who have to deal with complex tax laws will need the type of protection that is in Bill 6. They'll probably need more protection from other government bungling in the area of property taxation, which is just incredible, considering our municipality —

Mrs Johns: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's my understanding we're talking about Bill 6 here, which is the Partnerships Statute Law Amendment Act. I could be terribly wrong, but when I was in an accounting firm I don't remember practising any property tax.

The Acting Speaker: The point is well made.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This may be a very important debate for some, but we don't have a quorum in the House.

The Acting Speaker: Would you please check if we have a quorum.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Call in the members.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Oakwood.

Mr Colle: Before I was rudely interrupted, I thought it was quite clear that the issue here is protection against being sued by a client you do business with. The CAs are asking for their liability in this case to be protected, so that all members of a firm aren't sued because of a decision that another member of the firm makes.

CAs deal with taxation. They deal with all forms of taxation. One area of taxation in this province is property taxation, so if the CA gives out information or that firm gives out information or advice that could possibly end up with a client maybe getting misinformation about property or business tax, the way the law is stated today, that CA firm and all its members can be sued even though they weren't involved with giving out that advice.

That is right on the topic of this Bill 6. For the member opposite to stand up and say, "You can't talk about that" — that's basically what she said.

I've said very clearly that the CAs are going to need this kind of protection in terms of being sued because they do get into very complex legal situations in which they could be subject to legal recourse on behalf of a client.

As I said, I think there is going to be a lot of difficulty explaining the new property tax laws of this province. Anybody who gives advice on property taxation — even this government has proved it themselves. They've just passed five pieces of legislation on property taxation, and with every one they passed they said, "This is the perfect one." We're down now to the fifth bill. An hour ago they gave us 17 amendments. They admit themselves that they've got to be protected from themselves. So for the member opposite to say we can't talk about the very dangerous area you get into when you give advice on matters of money I think is something she is not correct on.

The CAs of this province are saying, "If we're going to do business in an affordable way, if we are going to be treated fairly as we do business, in an equitable way, we need some kind of protection." The protection is one that still allows for consumers to sue that individual chartered accountant — that is still there — or you can still sue the firm. The difference with Bill 6 is that not all members of the firm are, all of a sudden, arbitrarily equally liable. Only the ones who were involved with the file will now have to answer in court, if it gets to that point. That's what Bill 6 is doing. Both opposition parties, I think, like the approach of limiting this kind of liability.

The other thing in terms of this bill is that the other jurisdictions in Canada do not have it. We are the first jurisdiction that's going to enter this area. I hope we monitor the impact of this bill when it is passed and see what its consequences are. I would like to have a report before this House, if the minister could agree with that, and an update in perhaps six months or a year from now to see what the impact of this limited liability partnership legislation is. What's going to happen is that other professional organizations may ask for the same protection, so by having that kind of information before us, we will be better able to deal with the requests we are already having from the CGAs.

By the way, I forgot to mention that I'm going to share my time with the member for St Catharines, if I could, in this portion, when he returns.

As you know, the whole area of partnerships is a very complex area not only for CAs but I think for businesses in general. As you know, it's not unusual to hear about partnerships that were flourishing and were very copacetic that run across a turbulent period where the partnership has to be dissolved and there are all kinds of difficulties that arise.

1600

I think this might also encourage people who want to be CAs, who don't want to be on their own, who may want to join a small firm or a large firm; they know that their personal assets are somewhat protected if they do so. I think that is not a minor point to consider when you're looking at a bill like Bill 6, that it gives especially young

people who want to enter the profession of chartered accountancy a sense that if they go into a firm, especially as a junior, they will not go in there and perhaps be faced with litigation or a suit that another partner was involved with and they had no part in.

I think this type of approach is also reassuring to people who are looking at joining a firm, especially a partnership. I think there's no reason to deny that added protection that Bill 6 affords potential new accountants or other accountants who want to become part of a partnership. I certainly think that is another needed protection.

One of the other areas that is a small but interesting part of this bill is in reading the background notes on Bill 6. There is a growing field of business which they call e-business or e-commerce, which deals with the digital economy. In the digital economy, Mr Speaker, as you're well aware, coming from Ottawa, where I think Orleans is known as the cyberspace capital of North America —

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): Kanata.

Mr Colle: Kanata, excuse me, not Orleans. I thought it was Orleans, but it's Kanata, where there are new, innovative businesses where it's basically intellectual property. Accountants now have to deal with companies that deal with intangible intellectual properties, not the lock, stock and barrel approach of the 1940s.

Chartered accountants and their firms are now in a very grey area, you might say, in terms of what is proprietorship when it comes to ideas. These ideas that deal with e-commerce and e-business are extremely volatile. As you know, it's probably the fastest-growing part of the North American economy, the digital economy. I'm sure CAs are dealing daily with setting up these firms. CA partnerships are dealing with firms that deal with this new economy. This is a very challenging new area, and I think we're in an area of really being pioneers in establishing this new business which deals with the whole world of software, the whole world of digital communication, fibre optics, all these new commercial ventures which the CAs and their firms, large and small, have to give business advice to, have to give tax advice to.

This is where this kind of protection in terms of limited liability will also perhaps make it easier for chartered accountants and their firms to give affordable service to firms large and small. Most of the firms that are giants in the world of the digital economy were once very small one- or two-person operations. They've grown from small firms to mammoth multinationals that have grown out of places like Liberty City here in Toronto and Kanata and other places that are basically mushrooming out of our cities and giving jobs to people.

If this Bill 6 helps in encouraging economic fairness — and that's what this is about. It's about commercial economic fairness. I don't think anybody has had any major disagreement with that. In the hearings the concern brought forward was by the CGAs, who essentially wanted to be part of this, and I hope maybe in the future they will be.

But at this point we're dealing with CAs and their limited liability partnership legislation. We think this is needed protection. It's something that will keep prices

down, hopefully, and allow partnerships that deal with chartered accountancy to function in a reasoned way and a very businesslike way, so we don't get into massive lawsuits and don't turn away people who want to get into a profession that most people respect as being a necessary part of a modern economy. I think it's going to continue to grow in size in the number of people who are entering.

Especially with the property tax mess in this province, there's going to be a booming business for CAs. In our city of Toronto, 237,000 homes are getting a massive tax increase as a result of the tax policies of this government. About three months ago small business was knocking on the doors of all the CA firms. They were saying, "What is this government doing to me?" In Toronto alone, 17,000 small businesses were going to get a tax increase of over 100%. Because the government didn't have any answers for them, they had to go to their CAs, to the firms big and small, and say, "What's going on here?" That's the kind of advice CAs have to give. When you get into a tax mess you've got to go to a CA.

We hope that small business can still afford to go to chartered accountancy firms, that it's not just the KPMGs of this world. I think we've got to ensure that small firms can flourish and the small grocery store owner, that the hardware store, that those small proprietors can also get affordable tax advice from their CAs. If there are just the big firms and the dollars are too much, they will not go and get good advice and they'll suffer the consequences. It would be good practice to see more and more reasonable openness to chartered accountancy so that people in small and big business can get good, affordable direction in terms of what's happening with taxation, whether it be business tax, personal income tax or corporate tax, or just your property tax.

It's important to have tax laws that are understandable even by CAs. But now this government has given us the most complex, convoluted, controversial property tax laws. Even the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and Paul Pagnuelo and people like that are turning over seeing the complexity of tax laws that are coming into this province. Even though this government claims to be getting rid of red tape, we must have the Godzilla of red tape bills in these property tax laws that we have now before us in this province. I just hope we don't have Godzilla-type costs in trying to get advice to people who have to appeal their taxes.

In my own community there were people who were not members of any firm — I don't think they were accountants of any type — who were preying on people, trying to get them to appeal their taxes for a huge, exorbitant amount of money. I hope that doesn't continue, that people aren't taken advantage of, that when they want to appeal their taxes they go to bona fide professionals to do that and not just go to your local, street corner type of tax consultant to get advice, because it could cost you big-time.

1610

That's why we need an approach that comes from Bill 6 which says we've got to keep our costs down, we've got to ensure that there isn't all this litigation behind the

scenes whereby every time you give advice you could be in court. That's what this bill hopefully will restrict.

I think this is a bill that at least tries to acknowledge the fact that government does have a role to play, whether it be the CAs, the Institute of Chartered Accountants, or whether it be the lawyers or whether it be doctors. If they need some kind of protection from excessive litigation, the government should try and give them that kind of protection because, in the long run, it's the consumer who is going to pay for more medical fees, more accountancy fees or, for that matter, more real estate fees. We just can't make the cost of doing business an exorbitant one, and I think that's the spirit that the CAs came to the government with.

I know the member for Essex South is a CGA himself, and he thought this was a bill that was sound and honest in its intention and something that he supported. That's why I think our caucus, in deliberating about this bill, is glad to see it come through quickly. Hopefully, it will help in keeping prices down. It makes it a fair, you might say, business to be in. As I said, nobody wants to lose their home because of some lawsuit that was brought about that had nothing to do with you and, in a nutshell, to me that's what this bill is about.

I think the consumers of Ontario are going to benefit by this type of legislation that we support. I just think we have to keep the doors open, as I said, in ensuring that in the future if other organizations and professional associations want the same type of protection we should be ready to examine that. We should be open to examining their requests and not make it too difficult, but ensuring that it's done for the good of the consumers of this province and that door should be open.

I think the minister has mentioned that he's going to keep that door open and I certainly believe he will because, as I said, there will be others who will ask for a similar type of protection to limit their liability when it comes to doing business, or just basically practising, whether it be architects etc.

I will conclude and pass the baton over to my colleague from the Garden City of St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I want to put this bill in context of the entire program that the government is bringing forward, what its priorities would be and how this might even affect other legislation. When we have legislation come before us, we have to know that it affects other legislation as well.

I want to say, first of all, that we do support Bill 6. Some people say, "Don't you people in the opposition support anything?" and we do from time to time when there's good legislation. When the government follows our recommendation and brings in a bill of this kind, we're quite willing to support it. As uncharacteristic as it may be of me, I want to compliment the government today on listening to the Liberal opposition and bringing in this bill, which I think is an eminently sensible and supportable bill.

Ontario auditors are experiencing excessive liability exposure. I think we recognize that it's unfair to them and

really ultimately to the whole public. LLPs will protect the public interest by helping to ensure the continued availability of public accounting services on which Ontario's citizens and businesses rely.

Of course, people are going to need the services of these people if, for instance, they run into trouble with their businesses when we have the new Mike Harris gambling halls coming into various communities in the province where people don't want them, where in essence there are bribes being put forward in the way of saying, "Here's some administrative costs for those" —

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would think that the member for St Catharines, with all his experience, knows that he just used unparliamentary language.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Marland: "Bribe."

Mr Bradley: I've used that about 15 times in the House. It's not unparliamentary. It may offend you but it's not unparliamentary.

Hon Mrs Marland: It's unparliamentary, my friend.

The Acting Speaker: I should apologize. I was distracted by an article I was reading, which I shouldn't. I hope you'll excuse me. But at the same time I think the word "bribe" was not addressed to any individual. It was addressed in general. On the other hand, I think members should be very careful with the types of words they use. Sometimes they can be insulting, they can be used in a way that offends people. So I just want you to be careful.

Mr Bradley: I will use it in exactly the same way I have in every speech where I've dealt with the casino gambling or the new Mike Harris gambling halls, and that is — I even mentioned the last time I used it — it wasn't in the classic sense of somebody getting a bribe and doing something for it. It was bribing in the sense of providing an incentive for someone to accept a casino, the bribe being in this case administrative fees that the government of Ontario will pay to local communities, which in effect may then decide they would accept a charity casino.

That is commonly used as bribing people to do that. It's not used in a sinister way. It's used in a way of trying to persuade people, using a certain kind of funding that it is the case. The other is coercing — and the member would perhaps disagree with the word "coercing" — and antagonizing municipalities by saying to them in effect, "If you don't take these charity casinos, these new Mike Harris gambling halls, in your community then your charities may not get the money they would otherwise get." So it's a combination which is used on municipalities which are vulnerable. I'm wondering whether they will need the professional services of people who are affected by this legislation this afternoon. That's why I put it in that particular context, because we're having an escalation now of gambling opportunities around this province as a result of the policies of this government.

The vulnerable people, the most desperate people and the addicted people, may well require the assistance and professional services of chartered accountants as they're

placed in a very difficult position as a result of the temptations that are put before them in the form of escalating gambling opportunities promoted by the Mike Harris government, which in opposition was steadfastly opposed to the escalation and expansion of these gambling opportunities. So I certainly put it in that context.

I know that the government may not have to in this case put out yet another pamphlet across the province at taxpayers' expense. You will recall, Mr Speaker, that I rose in the House hoping that the editorialists of this province, who I know would not think of their own personal interests, of their companies, in other words, their newspaper businesses, or the people on radio or television, wouldn't be getting money from the government of Ontario for ads that would be running. I know they would want to protest in every way they could when the government puts out at taxpayers' expense clear propaganda.

Once again people are finding, just as they found two or three weeks ago, government partisan propaganda coming from the shop of the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board whose chief executive officer, David Lindsay, who is a good friend of ours in this House and used to be the principal secretary to the Conservative Premier of this province, who has been the communications director of the Conservative caucus and who has a long history in the Conservative Party, is now in a civil service position which is supposed to be clearly outside of the partisan realm — sent out at the cost of at least three quarters of a million dollars a glossy pamphlet which most independent people, I'm sure the member for Fort York would agree with me, could be declared nothing else other than straight partisan propaganda.

I'm told today that arriving in households is yet another partisan propaganda piece. I say to those who are Conservatives out there, not so much people in the House because they're not going to be able to protest that — this is part of the government policy — but to Conservatives out there who think, "Isn't this smart? Isn't Mike Harris and that crew smart?" they're using taxpayers' money to put out more pamphlets which are clearly government propaganda. This one deals with education. If you want more propaganda, Mike Harris says in his letter —

1620

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With all due respect to my friend, I believe we should have a quorum to listen to his remarks.

The Acting Speaker: Would you please check if we have a quorum.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I thank the member for Riverside for ensuring that there are sufficient members in the House to hear this message, because some may not be aware that the government is now sending across Ontario to every household yet more propaganda at the taxpayers' expense.

What I find offensive about this is not — if it came from the Progressive Conservative Party, that's fine. I don't mind when the Conservative Party sends out its propaganda. They've got money coming out their ears, they have so much money in the Conservative Party. I don't mind if they spend that on their political message. If it's the Conservative Party, that's their business. I don't mind that. That's fair, even though, as I say, because they have addressed the needs of the richest and most powerful people in the province, the Conservative Party is getting a thank you in the form of millions of dollars from major corporations and special interests in this province.

What is interesting, and what my friend from Lanark would find interesting, is that his own government, his Premier at this time, is trying to introduce as the package of so-called amendments to the way elections are run in this province ones where the government wants to drastically increase the amount of money that people can contribute to political parties and candidates and drastically increase the amount of money that can be spent on election campaigns, thereby Americanizing the system.

By doing so, the government also wants to do something else: It wants to try to prohibit third-party advertising. This is a government which is using taxpayers' dollars — and I wonder where the conscience of the Conservative Party is when this is happening — to convey a clearly partisan message. I'm challenging the editorialists of this province —

Hon Mrs Marland: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Maybe you could tell us, with your wise judgement, whether the member for St Catharines is speaking to the bill that is the matter before the House at this time.

The Acting Speaker: It's true that the member for St Catharines was using a different type of accounting. I would ask him to make sure that he maintains his topic on Bill 6.

Mr Bradley: I always accept your suggestions, Mr Speaker, but I always find interesting that a government which has changed the rules of this House to stack so heavily the rules of procedure in favour of the governing party, a party which hasn't shown much respect for democracy in this province since it came into office, would then have members rise in the House and try to cut off debate in this Legislature. I recognize that what I'm saying may not find favour in the ears of the members of the government, but there are people in this province — including, I'm sure, chartered accountants I mention — who will be offended by this.

I know that we have that a limited liability partnership means that partners "are not personally liable for the negligent acts of another partner or an employee supervised by another partner." Well, they may well be dealing with an issue of this kind. There may be somebody who wants to deal with the issue of government advertising and who may be consulting accountants in this province about the issue of government advertising. The member for Mississauga West understands the very direct link between that and this legislation.

If I were trying to relate it to the closing of hospitals in the Niagara region, then you may have a somewhat legitimate complaint to make. But I know there are chartered accountants concerned about this legislation who are also concerned about the fact that the hospital restructuring commission, better known as the hospital destruction commission, is showing up, three of its members, in Niagara on Thursday. I will not be there with the welcome sign for them.

My good friend the member for St Catharines-Brock put a big ad in the newspaper the other day saying, "I'm hands-off." Tom will correct me if I'm wrong. I would never want to say anything that would be not correct, but I think Tom said in his ad: "I will have nothing to do with it. I'm at arm's length. It's up to the commission."

Well, I'd like to put the chase on the commission. I'd like to get a posse up in town, including chartered accountants, to put the chase on the commission. What they have done — as, Mr Speaker, you would know in your area, for instance — is wreak havoc on many parts of Ontario in terms of the hospital system. I don't want them there. I may even get the commissioner to help me out. Commissioner Brown is here today. I may get him to put his trench coat on. Gary is here as well, and Bob is here; we have all these people here. I want the three commissioners to come down to the Niagara Peninsula to prevent the hospital destruction commission from closing hospitals in the Niagara region.

Chartered accountants would agree with me. Chartered accountants who see virtue in this bill do not see virtue in Bill 26, which was the bill that set up the hospital restructuring commission. That commission has gone about this province closing hospitals.

My friend from Niagara South would want to ensure that the Port Colborne Memorial and the Fort Erie hospital, one being Douglas Memorial in Fort Erie and the other Port Colborne General Hospital, would continue to play a vital and important role in his community. I know my friend from West Lincoln would want to know that the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital is not going to be drastically altered by the destruction commission coming to town, Mark Rochon and his colleagues coming to make pronouncements in the Niagara region.

I can tell you what chartered accountants in my area, in the most part, would want to see. What those who agree with this bill, as I do, would want to see is that the government would eliminate its \$43 million takeaway, cut, slash of the operating budgets of the Niagara Peninsula hospitals. That's what the plan is for, to take \$43 million out of them and then restructure them. The local restructuring committee that got up there said, "We can't do much else other than make some drastic recommendations, because they're taking all this money out."

I'm wondering whether there will be some consultation with chartered accountants in this province when people encounter genuine problems in the hospitals. They go to the hospital today and they come out and say it's a terrible situation in hospitals today compared to, say, 10 years ago. The folks who are in there delivering the services are

doing their very best. The nurses, the orderlies, the registered nursing assistants, the nursing aides, the doctors and the non-medical personnel are all trying to make the hospitals function as they should. But this government has withdrawn so much money from the operating budgets of hospitals that we have deteriorating health care in this province.

A conversion on the road to Damascus, where the government in the last year of its mandate panics and starts throwing money back in, will not fool anybody. That investment has been needed for some time, and even more money. I'm sure the chartered accountants in our part of the province would agree with that.

They would be concerned as well as I. All the political parties deal with accountants in this province in regard to expenditures and money being taken in; in other words, contributions to parties. You know, Mr Speaker, as well as I do and as well as the accountants do that south of the border, money is playing far too great a role in elections. From the President's office right down to local office elections, money plays a tremendous role in the United States. There's so much money in it now that a person has to be a multimillionaire to win a Senate seat or a gubernatorial campaign in many cases. Even the House of Representatives and state assemblies have expensive elections.

1630

What chartered accounts would want to know, because they're worried about the liability, is why this government would be proceeding to expand the amount of money that can be spent in election campaigns, in other words, increase the influence. They would be worried as well that the larger the contribution the more one can perceive that there might be some influence on government policy. To avoid that, we try to minimize and spread out the contributions so there are not a few large donors but a number of people who at the grass-roots level are prepared to support candidates and those in the election process.

I am concerned that these changes would take place and that the government wants to abolish the election finances commission, which in fact is the watchdog over election contributions and expenditures in this province. I plead to the commissioners, two of them who are here today, that we always have to have a policing agency. They are for more policing, they are for careful surveillance, they are for upholding the law, and their own government, Mike Harris and his advisers, the whiz kids, want to take away that policing body which is called the election finances commission.

Chartered accountants in this province are concerned about that because they deal — each party has to send to accountants in this province their yearly filing, and during an election campaign they have to have an accounting firm or an accountant review and sign the submission that is made to the election finances commission. I say to the commissioners, put those trench coats on, put those gloves on, put that mean, tough look on your faces and go to see Mike Harris, and say, "Mike, I think we've made a mistake."

There were some members from the Conservative Party who expressed concern about another aspect of that. They said the Premier shouldn't have to sign the nomination paper. There were three members who have been outspoken over the years, who are prepared to speak — I think it was Mr Skarica from Wentworth North, Mr Carr from Oakville and Mr Murdoch from Grey-Owen Sound who expressed concern about that. If they're concerned about that aspect of it, they must be concerned about the other proposals the government is putting forward, such as allowing advertising throughout the campaign period so that, with the many dollars that the governing party has accumulated from the wealthiest people in the province, the most powerful people in the province, they can saturate the airwaves with these ads throughout and win an election campaign based on money as opposed to policy, which no one would object to.

I know, Mr Speaker, you are pondering how this fits this bill. It's because we are so reliant upon accountants when we deal with the Election Finances Act that I brought that in. We would not want to see a situation where we place accountants in some liability situation.

Because you are in the chair now, Mr Speaker, I want to repeat this. I mentioned that this is a piece of legislation with which I am in full agreement. I am happy to say that because I have heard people say from time to time, especially on the government side: "You know, you people in opposition oppose everything. You're negative about things." — there was a bill we voted on this afternoon and a lot of what was in the bill we probably agree with, but they snuck inside it the slot machine legislation. My good friend from St Catharines-Brock, who I know — and I make no secret of this — is no raving proponent of gambling in this province, must have been shocked when he found that inside Bill 15 was a component that allowed for the expansion of gambling in the province. Had he known that, he would have absented himself from the House and not voted for the bill. I know Tom well and I know that's what he would have done, and many of his supporters would have agreed with his doing that. So he probably wondered why I didn't vote for that bill this afternoon.

This bill I'm going to vote for. This bill I'm going to support. This is a bill on which many members of our caucus have met with others, consulted with others, particularly within the profession, and have found it to be a good bill. So don't say we're always negative. Sometimes when you get an interview on the radio, for instance, the person will say, "Well, isn't there anything you agree with in this legislation or this budget or something?" and I say: "You have to call Frank or Tom. They'll tell you everything good about what the government is doing, and because they will do that, I don't have to do that." That's why. I don't have to take that time to do it because they do such a good job of supporting the government's position.

I know that government members will be very concerned about this new piece of propaganda that's going out at taxpayers' expense.

Mr Marchese: It's in colour, isn't it?

Mr Bradley: It's in colour. I have it in black and white because it was faxed to me. Somebody who was highly offended by it faxed it to me and said, "You want to investigate this because we remember you brought the multicoloured, glossy one in from the jobs and investment agency." This one here my colleague from Ottawa West shows to me. I had a discussion with someone involved with this who said, "This isn't government propaganda." This person was looking for somebody to agree with him. He finally found Guy Giorno, who agreed it wasn't government propaganda. But everybody else objectively did.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Who is Guy Giorno?

Mr Bradley: Guy Giorno is the chief whiz kid. He's the top adviser to the government. He has more power than even cabinet ministers. He is more powerful than the locomotive. He is able to leap the Legislature in a single bound. He is a man of great power.

This is what we see: the jobs agency. I thought, "Well, they're out there getting jobs for people; they're out there trying to promote something," and I find out the only thing they're promoting is the Conservative Party of Ontario. Therefore we have this kind of government propaganda.

Not only is it unethical to be using taxpayers' money for this purpose, it is also unfair in the political process. I look at a government and I say, "Governments always have far more resources than an opposition to be able to put out a message." But second, this government, as the governing party, has all kinds of money.

Tom has a fund-raiser in St Catharines and they have to turn them away at the door, don't they, Tom? They have it at the Ramada Parkway Inn. The Premier comes down, and all the people who want to ingratiate themselves with the Premier or people who might be dealing with the government in some way or good, solid Conservative supporters over the years line up at the door and they have to turn them away. That's how successful they are.

You don't find there many low-income people. You don't find there many people who are disadvantaged in our society. You find largely the most powerful people. You find mostly the wealthiest people who contribute to the Conservative Party. Tom, when he goes into the next election campaign, is going to have money coming out of his ears to run that campaign.

What he's going to say — I shouldn't say "Tom" because we're not supposed to use personal names. My very good friend the member for St Catharines-Brock, and he is a good friend of mine, will be looking at this saying: "Premier, this is unfair and this is unfair. Look, we've got lots of money. We've got more money than we can spend in the campaign." Well, maybe not after they raise the limit. They have all this money, so that's important.

As I get down to the last couple of minutes of my remarks on this important bill, I want to remind people that while the government is moving more quickly on this, and we want to see that happen, look what happens when you bring in legislation which is agreeable. We'll have this over with this afternoon. We will have agreed to this

piece of legislation this afternoon because there's a good consensus there. Yet the government has on the books five time allocation motions. For the people at home, those are motions which choke off further debate on some very significant bills where there are contentious issues. Even where they have to bring in all kinds of last-minute amendments in committee they have to choke off debate.

1640

This shows a lack of respect for democracy, because when you bring a bill of this kind forward, this afternoon's bill, you're going to get complete consensus. We will take the opportunity to perhaps put it in the context of the entire government program, as I've tried to this afternoon, but we know the bill will pass. If you developed more of a consensus — for instance, on the election financing bill that you plan to ram through the Legislature before the end of this session — if you were to sit down with the other two parties, as we did with this bill, and come to a consensus, come to an agreement, then even that bill would pass.

But of course the interests of a party which has all kinds of money and believes that money should play a very major role in a campaign are different from those who believe that the democratic process should be based on debate, direct contact with the voter by door-knocking and other kinds of campaigning that do not require the kinds of huge financial resources which are contemplated in the change that this government, Mike and Harris and his colleagues, plans to ram through the Legislature in the form of changes to the Election Finances Act, even a change which will abolish the Commission on Election Finances, which is the watchdog, the policeman over the expenditures and contributions.

I'm happy to support this bill this afternoon and I give a full undertaking that it will be done so expeditiously.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Martin: I'd like to congratulate the member for St Catharines and the member for Oakwood for some very appropriate and interesting comments this afternoon.

Guy Giorno — the bill that's coming up I think Thursday, the red tape bill, doesn't that have a piece in there now about doing away with P&P or something? Have you read that? Would that be Guy maybe taking over a bit more of the good office of the Premier's Council?

Mr Bradley: That's my worry.

Mr Martin: That sure was my worry too.

I really appreciated the way you were able to expand the philosophy principles behind this bill to include all of government. I would be hoping, like you, that the kind of goodwill that's extended through this bill to a very worthy professional organization would be the kind of offering that will be made by this government to all kinds of other folks. Alas, the track record so far, though, as the member has pointed out, is not indicating that's as it is or as it will be as we watch the unfolding of this government and what's going on.

I also find it rather interesting and good that today we have found some time to do this bill, which is very

important, because you know this past week we've been spending a lot of time debating closure motions, time allocation motions. It's the order of the day around here now it seems. Every time you turn around you're doing another time allocation motion. It's good that the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations has the kind of clout that he does in cabinet to actually be able to get this stuff in here and have us debate it and run it through the appropriate process. We had hearings on this and they were very helpful and here we are.

Today I'm going to be supporting the members for St Catharines and Oakwood in asking this House to approve this piece of legislation.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's always a pleasure to rise and acknowledge the eminent speeches that the member for St Catharines brings to our attention and the points he makes. I always listen with great interest even to his criticism. I was really overcome by his exemplary compliments to the member for St Catharines-Brock. I know the member for St Catharines and the member for St Catharines-Brock in the next provincial election will be friends. I know the revisions to the Elections Finances Act that are going on were being discussed and are important.

But for the members as well, Bill 6 is really first in the acknowledgement — all members have acknowledged that — to address the recent changes in the way the world economy, the free trade economy and the globalization of the economy works. It's about time they addressed some of the issues with respect to limited partnerships and some of the automation systems and digital systems that the member for Oakwood mentioned.

In my own respect, hopefully it simplifies the process for all small business people. This government is very intent on, as much as possible, deregulating, removing the barriers for growth for all small business across this province. There isn't anybody in the House on any side who would disagree with that. For instance, in the last budget one of the important announcements was the intention to reduce by half, by 50%, the small business corporations tax, from 9.25% to just over 4% over the next five or six years. I think all members are here to do the right thing for their constituents, and I am very pleased that the member for St Catharines is supporting Bill 6.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?. The Chair recognizes the member for Ottawa East.

Mr Cullen: Ottawa West, Mr Speaker. Ottawa West is the best, I keep saying.

I'm delighted to follow on and comment on the remarks made by my colleagues the member for Oakwood and the member for St Catharines. I thought the member for Oakwood made a very telling point when he went through the evolution of this government's property tax policies, the five bills that were brought in and the amount of regulation that is required, that will flow out of it, as a result of the government's continuing search for some kind of property tax stability and of course the demands that that will place on CAs, whose bill we're now dealing

with. This bill is, of course, to adjust the liability requirements that CAs must meet.

It made me think that when you look at this government and the legislation it has brought in — this was the government that was supposed to get government out of the taxpayer's face; this was the government that was supposed to reduce regulation, make life simpler and easier for business and what have you. Then I began to look at the government's record in terms of the legislation it has brought in. The amount of regulation, the regulatory authority it has given to itself, almost requires the assistance of CAs and lawyers and what have you — more business for these folks — to decipher the regulations, the immense amount of red tape this government has brought forward with its legislation to deal with these issues.

I find it is interesting that hand in hand, as the government makes life more complicated, it issues the regulations for property tax through the minister without public oversight, yet it's going to protect CAs from liability. I think the legislation is required. Some may say it's independent of what the government regulations have done, but quite frankly one can't help but remark on how much regulation there is as a result of this government.

Mr Pouliot: I too wish to commend the member for St Catharines. It is very much part of the official opposition's mantra that, once you become House leader, you are afforded an opportunity not afforded to any of your colleagues. For instance, Hansard will attest that for any bill, be it on Christmas Eve or February 4, Jim is at his post. He must feel that by himself he will save the province, that he's responding to the call, and he has become a self-proclaimed "authority on every subject matter that comes in front of the House." Talented though he is, it is to the point that the time reserved for his friend and colleague of many years, dean of the House along with Mr Wildman, Mr Renfrew —

Mr Marchese: The member for Renfrew North.

Mr Pouliot: The member for Renfrew North, by many accounts the most eloquent member in this House, has to ask permission of the member for St Catharines to address his critic's role.

But the member for St Catharines is most consistent: he will share with us not a bit of wisdom. He will read the compendium, the title of the bill, and then will take advantage of this opportunity to tell us about a range of problems such as the Mike Harris casino. As parting shots, we'll bring all politics local, that everything is so relevant to the great riding of St Catharines. Although I enjoy it, I wish he would stick to the bill.

1650

The Acting Speaker: Your time has expired. The member for St Catharines has two minutes to respond.

Mr Bradley: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to my friends in the House from Sault Ste Marie, Durham East, Ottawa West and Lake Nipigon, Lake Nipigon being one of the largest ridings. I have to say to members of the House, if I'm ever speaking to students or others about the size of ridings, I always mention Lake Nipigon, which I

think goes from Lake Superior to Hudson Bay. It's a huge mass which is larger than many countries and the riding is going to increase further as a result of some of the changes being made.

I want to respond to the member for Sault Ste Marie, who was concerned that in the red tape bill he would disappear. My fear has constantly been that the back-room boys — and girls I suppose you have to say — the back-room people have full control over the government. When I hear the three members who have expressed concern — today the newspaper mentioned three Conservative members — I worry about that as well. They're worried about the fact that somebody else is controlling things back there. I'm glad the member for Sault Ste Marie reminded me of that.

My friend from Durham East mentioned the member for St Catharines-Brock, and indeed you can be assured that in our electoral contest it will be a very upfront and friendly contest, as Tom and I are good friends. We'll contest the issues and debate thoroughly and do our best to win, but it will be a good example of an excellent and clean campaign, I'm sure. Tom will not be wanting to use any of the government propaganda that is put out at taxpayers' expense, I'm sure of that.

The member for Ottawa West, very insightful in his comments and very kind in his comments; the member for Lake Nipigon, who I always enjoy hearing speak — and, Mr Speaker, I want to thank you for once again understanding that we must put every bill in the context of the total government program.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Martin: I appreciate the opportunity today to enter into uniformity with every side of the House, to say that I and our caucus at the end of this day will be voting in support of this bill. This is a very important piece of legislation. It sets a standard now to which I think all other professions will aspire. I think it would be short of us if somebody didn't — probably many of us will say thank you to the chartered accountants who are here today for the work that they've done over a long period of time.

Mr Cullen: I think they should stand and be recognized.

Mr Martin: I think they should stand and be recognized too. Would it be okay if we did that, Mr Speaker? Anyway, they're here.

We appreciate the fact that they're here and the good work that they've done to get this piece of legislation to where it is today. I know when we were government they were forever in meetings with some of the folks who had some responsibility then. They kept with it, stuck at it, kept their noses to the grindstone and brought it to the present government, and here we are, three years later.

The Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations needs to be congratulated today too for getting this to where it is, working with his colleagues on the other side of the House to make sure that we all understood the importance of this bill. We had a chance through debate here and we had a chance through the discussion we had when we went to committee for that afternoon to hear

from some others out there about this bill, and to ultimately get to a point where we can all agree that we have an important, a valuable and a good piece of legislation in front of us that will indeed serve the people of this province well, and in particular those who operate or do business under the umbrella of the chartered accountants of Ontario.

The only comment I will offer this afternoon in relation to this, and I think it's important that we bring it up and speak about it — because I want to share my time this afternoon with my colleagues in this place who are here because they think the business of this House is very important and want to have a chance to put on the record their thoughts on pieces of legislation that come through that are important. They impact the lives of everybody who calls Ontario home. This piece of legislation, no less than others, deserves their comment and they're here to do that. The member for Fort York, the member for Windsor-Riverside and the member for Lake Nipigon are going to speak this afternoon as well. I'll be waiting to hear from them and I'm sure they'll have something very important to offer.

What I want say to say is that this bill brought forward by the chartered accountants of Ontario sets a very interesting precedent in our jurisdiction. It's the first of its kind in Ontario and it needs to be recognized for what it is. It's an attempt in this day of the lawsuit, this day of the legal system forever out there trying to find reasons to sue somebody for something so that others might benefit from that — some of it very legitimate, some of it righting some wrongs that have been done, but much of it questionable.

It comes to us primarily, I would say, from the States, this want to sue, this pursuit of recourse for wrongs done, perceived or otherwise, through the courts so that we have compensation of some sort that happens. In some instances we have recognized that this ability goes too far and causes undue hardship to people who actually, directly or even sometimes indirectly, had no part to play in the hurt that was caused, so should they have to pay the price for that? This bill resolves that in a very important and significant way for the chartered accountants of Ontario. We need to be now encouraging other professional groups out there who find themselves in the same circumstance so often to come forward and perhaps have the same protection.

One of the groups that came before the committee was the certified general accountants, another group in our province who do some very excellent work out there on behalf of so many of us and organizations and groups in the province that deserve the same consideration. As a matter of fact, I was very happy at committee to hear members of the government say they would be more than happy and willing to entertain the certified general accountants in their attempt to have the same kind of coverage apply to them. Ms Ross, from Hamilton — I'm not sure of the exact name of the riding —

Mr Marchese: Hamilton West.

Mr Martin: Hamilton West — is on the record as saying that group should come forward, should present to

her and her caucus and to the minister their information and concern and perhaps have that addressed as well. I would suggest that there are others who might stand to benefit as well. The law profession is one group that just jumps out at me.

I want to, for just a couple of minutes today, talk about the philosophy that underlies this bill, the theme that flows through it that interests me greatly. It's a philosophy, an underpinning, that was there when this Legislature a few years ago entertained some concerns, some experience from another group of people, businesses that found themselves before the courts charged with some health and safety regulation breach by a worker, and because of the huge lawsuit that was launched and won by the worker, found themselves not able to practise their business any more and went bankrupt. This government recognized at that time that was just a bit beyond the pale. That was, in many instances, somewhat unfair. So they brought in a piece of legislation that put in place the Workers' Compensation Board, that would allow workers who found themselves hurt on the job to have some expedient recourse to a body that would determine what the damages were and what it was that the worker needed to sustain themselves while they recuperated, and provided usually some opportunity for some retraining or education so they could get back to work again.

1700

I think everybody understood the very delicate balancing act that went into that piece of legislation, not unlike the very delicate balancing that goes on here, where somebody who has been wronged by a member of, in this instance, the chartered accountants profession, has the right to some recourse to the course of law to sue for damages, but not to take down the whole company, not to take down members of that company who had no knowledge of the wrong that was being done and were not directly or indirectly involved at all in the wrongdoing, that those people who were not culpable would not be harmed.

It was the same thing with the Workers' Compensation Board when it was set up, the same balancing, the same idea: trying to protect people, trying to be fair, trying to put in place vehicles that would allow those who have been damaged some recourse but, on the other hand, not to allow that damage to go so far as to completely destroy a company or a person who wasn't involved directly in that action.

I think that's good. But what we've seen by way of the track record of this government over the last three years is not of that ilk, is not of that nature, is not of that philosophy. They have very clearly, in their attempt to bring Ontario into a free market system, bring Ontario into the global economy in a way that by their estimation makes us more competitive, targeted some people who are at the end of the day very much innocent bystanders, innocent victims, people who are not directly involved in inflicting the pain that perhaps the economy of Ontario was feeling. I'm not quite so sure about that, given the very good times that the government says we're in, the

very good times that the government says we should expect over the next few years.

To target anybody other than those who are responsible for the running up of a deficit, the running up of a debt, perhaps the building of empires that became in some instances maybe too unwieldy — I don't know; I'm not making judgements here. But to blame a group of people out there on the fringes, for the most part, of our communities these days — the poor, those people on assistance of various sorts — for all of the ills that this province is having to deal with now as it grapples with the issue of deficit and debt and spending and revenue, to blame it all on them and to target them unnecessarily harshly, as is being done, in my mind is not in keeping with the spirit of the bill that we have in front of us here today, which is to be very clear about who wronged whom, to be very clear about the opportunity for that person to have recourse, but not to scattergun out and hurt people who weren't involved, particularly those who had in some instances absolutely no opportunity whatsoever to have challenged the person who was causing the wrong to the corporation in the first place. I think that's just totally unfair.

It's happening to a whole lot of people. Some of you recognize, if you've been following the debate on the changes to the workers' compensation system in the province, that the field has now been tipped very clearly and seriously in favour of the business sector, industry, corporations, as they deal with their injured workers. Injured workers no longer have the same recourse to the kind of recompense that they had before when they found themselves hurt or whatever. Now they're left to their own opportunities to try and right themselves. That's unfortunate. It's moving away from the spirit of that law.

I would say to the chartered accountants that they should be wary. You're winning today. Today is a day when you can celebrate and feel good and be happy about this bill. But be wary that other governments don't come along and take away what you've won today for your profession, because it can happen like that. It happens around here quite often in that way.

It has happened here over the last three years to workers in this province. Things that they thought were cast in stone, that they won by way of the evolution of the Labour Relations Act in this province, that workers who found themselves injured on the job got through the Workers' Compensation Board with the gains that were made there incrementally, ever so slowly over a number of years, in a matter of three short years changed, a lot of it gone and not there anymore. So we have to be careful, we have to be watchful all the time.

It's depressing to see what's going on out there. The poor of the province very early in this government's history — this government; I don't mean previous Conservative governments, but this government — in the Common Sense Revolution were targeted, were pointed to as the cause of most of the economic ills, the fiscal and financial ills of this province. They were targeted, very clearly, as the people responsible. They were taken to court, so to speak, and found guilty, without ever actually

having gone through that process. They had 21.6% of their income taken away, then the services that they depend on to support them in so many important and valuable ways out there in the community: counselling, homes that were affordable, a whole variety of things.

With each budget that comes out, with each statement from the Minister of Community and Social Services, we hear of more that's taken away from these folks — from their birthright, because they are Ontario citizens — to the point where we now have the poor forced to go to the streets because they can no longer get the assistance they need. They are forced out on to the streets. We see them when we walk up and down the streets of this fine city, sleeping in parks, sleeping on park benches, standing there with their hats out, forced to beg.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): You didn't have any of that when you were in government?

Mr Martin: Not in the same numbers, Mr Ford.

But now let me tell you what's happening to those people who have no other recourse but to beg. They're being taken to court. They're out there not because of anything that they personally have done that wronged somebody or that was wrong. They are the casualties of an economic system that seems satisfied with an unemployment rate that's somewhere between 8 and 12%. In my own community of Sault Ste Marie right now it's about 20%. An economic system that seems to be satisfied with that kind of unemployment pushes people who can't find work because there is no work out into a realm that none of us would ever want to be in but may find ourselves in at some point.

Being the very caring and interested human beings that we are, we find ways. If we go for assistance, we're told we don't qualify; if we go for assistance, we're told we only qualify for this much, and it's not enough. So where do we end up? Well, some people end up on the street with their cap in their hand, with their tin cup out for a few pennies that people walking by could drop in. And what happens in Ontario? Now these folks are going to be prosecuted.

Mr Marchese: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The place is depleting itself. We need a quorum in this House. Would you please check for a quorum?

The Acting Speaker: Would you please check for a quorum.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

1710

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Martin: I was saying that we have people now in Ontario forced to beg for their living. What I found today, when I was downtown and picked up a flyer from folks, is that they are now actually being prosecuted for doing that. Where's a person supposed to go any more in Ontario if you don't have what it takes to sustain yourself?

Just let me read this to you:

"Every day in court homeless people are being prosecuted by the TTC and handed fines as high as \$200 for simply seeking spare change on TTC property."

I've been to other cities and I've seen panhandlers, but I have never seen panhandlers as friendly as the panhandlers you have on the streets of Toronto. I haven't. To suggest for a second that they pose a threat of any sort to anybody is beyond the pale. It's just not true.

"Most are described as standing silently, cap in hand or sign at their feet, seeking a bit of spare change for a coffee or a meal. Most cannot be in court to answer to these charges. They have no address to mail the court notice to, so there's no one to speak up on their behalf. The 'justice' rubber-stamps the conviction, the fines build up and jail time awaits that homeless person who will be unable to pay the hundreds or thousands in fines.

"Why are the homeless being punished? The TTC insists it is simply enforcing the anti-soliciting bylaw. Yet why are the homeless being denied the right to do what buskers, charitable organizations and advertisers do daily on the TTC?"

Which brings me to my point. Where do these people go to have their concerns addressed? Where do these people go for recourse at a time when we have a government in power that forever is taking away when it comes to the poor?

Every time we get a bill passed that concerns social assistance or social welfare, it's takeaway time, it's reduction time, it's kick-them-in-the-butt time. Where do they go?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I can only have one speech at a time. We'll give you a couple of minutes later on.

Mr Martin: A few years ago, when companies and injured workers found themselves locked in combat over who owed what and what was fair, they came to the government, and the government addressed that concern by bringing in a piece of legislation that became the Workers' Compensation Act, which is playing out in Ontario today — mind you, being diminished by this government in a very serious way to no longer be as helpful to the workers as it was.

Where do the chartered accountants go when they need redress, when they look at some of the companies that are part of their organization and find that there are lawsuits now coming, more and more every day, that target the whole company in a way that puts very honourable professional people, working very hard to make a living, under threat? Where do they go for redress? They come to the Legislature, and with some help from the government side, with some assistance from the opposition through a process of bringing the bill forward, going to committee and hearing from people, we put together a piece of legislation that deals with that.

That's why I'm happy today to stand here and say that I will support this bill, because it's been through the appropriate and proper process and we've all had a chance to look at it. It will redress a very real concern. It will have looked at both sides of the issue, in this instance, and

made sure on one hand that consumers who buy their service are confident that they will get the best of service in almost every circumstance, and if they don't, there will be insurance in place to make sure that they get compensated for that. But people who are innocent simply by way of association will no longer be hammered because of the ill activity of one of the members.

My appeal to the government in supporting this bill is that they will take the spirit of this bill and apply it more readily to everything else they do.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the honourable member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker, for your kindness, of course, in granting me some time to speak to Bill 6. I will continue from where my friend from Sault Ste Marie left off and add a few things.

I've got to tell you, today it seems that many of us are in a very charitable mood. In this regard, the chartered accountants are very lucky because we have nothing but good things to say about them today and about the government. Under normal circumstances I have been inclined to be a little more combative against this government, as you have observed from time to time, sitting in the chair. We often have the opportunity to remark on the larger picture stuff because often governments would like us to isolate and compartmentalize issues and not remind the general public about the larger stuff that really matters. You always have to put things into context, as I normally try to do.

You will recall Bill 26, a very anti-democratic bill. It was a very autocratic kind of bill that speaks to the nature of this government. It gives power to ministers. But I would have spoken at length, is what I wanted to say, about these things because there's so much to say on these issues of anti-democratic procedures and autocracy.

These people exemplify those characteristics very well. You will recall the callous disregard for the people of Toronto when they amalgamated the city of Toronto with all the other cities; the changes in election financing these people are proposing that will give Conservative ridings the ability to raise up to 90,000 bucks. This benefits Tories, you know that. It doesn't benefit us. I find it a very anti-democratic change that the Chair of Management Board is likely to introduce in this place. We're going to fight that when the time comes. Changes to the rules of this assembly which give us less time to speak in the House have been anti-democratic, in my view; the scandalous dealings of casinos in Niagara. As my friend from Welland-Thorold said, "That deal stinks to high heaven." We, through our leader, Howard Hampton, have been raising this issue on a daily basis, trying to get this government to account for those dealings. There is so much there.

But I have decided today that it isn't worth being combative all the time, that it's good from time to time to be charitable. It's a rare thing indeed that this government introduces a bill that has no controversy, or very little controversy. It doesn't happen very often in this place. As many of the regular viewers know, we have fought this

government on a steady basis on almost everything they have done, from the education changes they call reform, which I as a former teacher and trustee have witnessed are a disaster for our children, our parents and our teachers; to changes to our health care that in my view and in the view of many who have had to experience the disastrous cuts to hospitals — they know this government has not been too friendly to the general population out there.

Today they introduced something that is less controversial. You have Mike Harris, the normally pugilistic kind of guy, the normally vituperative man, turned very gentle from time to time. The pussycat comes out, and I like to see it every now and again because it's part of who we are as humans. It isn't right that the Premier of this province is hell-bent on being pugilistic against every interest group — except those who are very wealthy, of course — and that's why we fight him on a regular basis.

1720

We fought him, as you know, on the whole notion of giving billions of dollars away to people who don't need it. Those are not interest groups, I would argue; those are just his buddies. Everybody else — the cuts to the poor, the cuts to hospitals, the cuts to education, the attacks on tenants through the so-called tenant protection package, and the cuts to workers' compensation, now renamed something else, meaning they are going to receive 5% less benefits. God, there isn't a soul this man hasn't touched, except his buddies that he wants to give hefty tax cuts to, in the order of \$5 billion. The ones who really benefit, of course, are the top 6%, who get a whopping two billion bucks. Talk about lining the pockets of a select interest group.

Normally you would hear me attack him on those matters, but today we've got another issue and I'm being kind, for two reasons. First, we are under the watchful eye of chartered accountants who have been in this assembly listening to our remarks, taking notes so they could come back and chat with us in the event that we perhaps did not interpret this bill correctly. Under that watchful eye, people like me are very careful, obviously.

More important, I'm a little more charitable today because I attended the celebration of the life of Dan Leckie. As some of you know, he died several days ago. He was a former city councillor, a friend of mine and a friend of many. Five hundred people attended this celebration of Dan Leckie's life. He was described by one of the speakers, Gordon Cressy, as a gentle giant. Indeed this man was a gentle giant.

But I was not feeling very well today in thinking how fragile life is, how fleeting life can be and how easily someone could just leave this earth in a matter of days, as our good friend has done. It is these things that humble me and give me a sense of my own humility and my own limited time in this place. So from time to time I go after these guys with a great deal of passion and pepper, but today it has been toned down by that event I attended today. I just wanted to mention to those watching that Dan Leckie was indeed a gentle giant, a very humble man with

great ideas. Five hundred of us honoured his life and his accomplishments today, and I wanted to mention that.

But on the issue at hand, we clearly agree with Bill 6, a bill that "provides for the formation of a new type of legal entity, a limited liability partnership." In limited liability partnerships, partners "are not personally liable for the negligent acts of another partner or an employee who is directly supervised by another partner. However, the partnership continues to be liable for the negligence of its own partners and employees." In this regard, we are very supportive of this.

I am told, and I have no reason to disbelieve the minister, that public education will indeed happen in this regard. We know that most consumers would not have a clue about what a limited liability partnership means and the implications it might have to them, but I am told by the minister that they are obliged — he may have announced this in the House; I'm not sure — to explain to the consumer when they meet with them or are engaged in some kind of work with them what this means.

The other matter I wanted to raise is the fact that there are three requirements here that I think are reasonable requirements that they must face, including, which is important to me, the second bullet of this, which says that the professional governing body must establish "mandatory minimum insurance coverage." I believe that gives a good deal of protection or should give some protection to consumers. I'm not quite sure what "minimum" means, but I am going to assume that it's sufficient to protect the interests of consumers.

I was somewhat disappointed that they didn't include the certified general accountants, and in the letter we have, and I'm sure the minister and others have, dated May 8, they say, "We believe that this is an omission" — meaning they have been omitted from this bill — "which should be rectified as there is no reason to treat the two accounting designations differently."

I am tempted to argue that this is true. I'm in agreement with this. I'm not quite sure why they were left out, although the minister argued that they can, through a change to their own act, do this on their own without having to have another bill here to do that. On the other hand, I think it might have been a whole lot easier had they both been included at the same time without having to force them to go through another process, which may or may not be too complicated, perhaps the minister might argue, but it certainly would have been a lot easier.

The certified general accountants also argue to Minister Tsubouchi, "Limited liability partnerships should not be limited to the larger firms. Limiting the benefits of limited liability partnership status to the larger firms is uncompetitive and unfair to smaller firms."

They raise interesting points. They may or may not be true, I'm not sure, but it's at least a question they ask and a point they make that seem to me a reasonable point. I'm assuming this is beyond our ability to control or to convince the minister that it should be corrected. On the other hand, we hope that certified general accountants will be

able to change the act in order to allow them to have the same status as certified accountants.

I think this is a good bill. I commend the government on this very rare kind of bill that has me agreeing with them, because generally I'm in complete disagreement with much of what they do.

I will leave time to my other two colleagues to make some comments as well.

Mr Lessard: I'm pleased to be able to enter into the debate with respect to Bill 6, An Act to amend the law with respect to Partnerships.

What I need to point out at the outset is that this is a bill that amends the Partnerships Act, but only does so with respect to chartered accountants. One of the things I would like to raise during the course of this debate is the application of the Partnerships Act to other types of partnerships.

As you're aware, I'm sure, I am a lawyer in one of my other hats, other than the time I spend here as a member of provincial Parliament, which is pretty substantial. It's a pretty substantial part of my time, I should let you know. The other part of my time I do involve myself in a partnership with a lawyer in Windsor, Deluzio and Lessard Law Firm. My partner's name is David Deluzio. We on occasion discuss the possibility or the eventuality of having the limited liability partnership provisions, similar to what is being proposed in this act, applying to lawyers.

The Law Society of Upper Canada and the Canadian Bar Association — Ontario have been lobbying the government to make those changes with respect to limited liability partnerships for lawyers. We suspect that legislation will be forthcoming shortly to deal with that issue.

However, what we're dealing with here today is limited liability as it pertains to chartered accountants, which is something that I support. I would have supported as well having this bill go to committee to address some of the concerns members of the public, consumers, may have with respect to the idea of limited liability. Although many of us come in contact with chartered accountants or other types of accountants, CGAs as well, at times when we have to do our income tax, and when we as members of provincial Parliament run for election and need to have accountants look at our election finances statement as well, although we do have contact on occasion with accountants, as far as how they organize their business is concerned, that's something that the public generally doesn't understand to a great extent.

1730

I know there are chartered accountants here with us today, but I think it's important that when this legislation is passed, which I suspect will happen very shortly, they do what they can to educate the public, to engage in a public awareness campaign to tell the public what it means to have limited liability. Some people may be concerned that limited liability may mean that if they have a claim or if they've had some problems in dealing with their accountants that have caused them some loss, they

may feel they may not be able to recover to the extent of the total damages they've experienced.

But I'm led to understand that accountants do have to have errors and omissions insurance, the same as lawyers have to have, and if there are consumers who may have a claim for professional negligence, that's something that would be covered by and large by insurance. What this bill is really all about is limiting the personal liability of partners for the negligence of another partner. It protects the personal assets of an innocent partner, which I think is a good idea. It doesn't mean that persons who may experience a loss because of the negligence of an accountant aren't going to be able to recover any damages, because we know that accounting partnerships by and large have substantial assets that could be subject to satisfying claims of individuals who may suffer loss.

That's something that accountants really need to bring to the attention of the public. But as I said, it's a good concept. It's something that should be extended to lawyers. It should be extended to architects as well, and other professionals who undertake their business as partnerships.

The formation of corporations has been around for a number of years, and we know that one reason corporations are established is to limit the liability of those people who invest in corporations. Corporations are entities that have been created by legislation. They only exist by virtue of legislation like the Business Corporations Act. They were created to satisfy a particular business need many years ago.

But for some reason certain types of professional organizations haven't been able to have that opportunity to operate their business as corporations. Accountants were one of those groups that haven't been able to do that. In fairness, considering the protections that are available through liability insurance and professional business practices, accountants, lawyers, architects and others, who really perform their functions in a manner similar to corporations, should be afforded the limited liability protection that corporations have. Many may argue that they should have the same income tax benefits that corporations have. Why should large corporations get the benefit of what may seem to be an unfair tax advantage compared to professionals who operate their business in the same manner, as accountants do?

Those were the brief remarks I wanted to raise today, Speaker. I thank you for giving me this opportunity, and I want to leave the remainder of my time to my very good friend, mon frère, the member for Lake Nipigon.

Mr Pouliot: Merci, Monsieur le Président et mon cher collègue membre de cette très honorable profession.

I take pride and pleasure in closing the debate on this very important piece of legislation, for you are the first to acquiesce in the common sense that Bill 6 provides you.

What Bill 6 does, in a few broadly summarized words, it simply provides for a new type of legal entity, that of a "limited liability partnership" whereby the force of the partnership, the resources, the wealth associated with that entity in that context, is open to scrutiny and recourse. But

what you have is a limitation, and we would hope that the government in their wisdom — I hope I'm not over-reacting — would apply the same common sense to other professions which are jeopardized.

They too have a system of compliance, of self-monitoring, and at times, with respect to you and your tenure, Speaker, if I dare say, the best way to have compliance is to ask the profession to do so. The doctors do it. You have under errors and omissions some protection if you see your friendly advocate, your friendly barrister, solicitor, lawyer, notary to the public elsewhere. But for the chartered accountant you have a parallel with validity, you have the same thing, a body that looks at themselves, a body that monitors compliance, and you have the possibility of insurance, hence protection for the client.

I commend you for being here for the duration. Bill 6 is not for some the most exciting of legislation. It is not catalytic. It's not going to make or break Parliament. One could say it's not filled with human dimension.

When the member for St Catharines was talking about Bill 6 and a range of other matters which had little relevancy, I could see the pain in the pages' faces. They began to roll their eyes, then to agonize. I felt quite sorry; it was their second day and I thought they would leave us in droves never to come back —

Ms Martel: The third day.

Mr Pouliot: The third day, I'm sorry.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): What bill was that?

Mr Pouliot: Bill 6. It's important if you're in the profession, if you're a client. I heard many lawyers who are also politicians, members of the assembly, talk about Bill 6 this afternoon. They have a close association with chartered accountants. I know, and the record will attest to that, that lawyers see chartered accountants far more often than you see them. They're an honourable profession, and when some of them are politicians, I can understand that it does not always draw the best of people's reactions. You have the favour of the general public. People know that you provide an essential service, not only to those who can afford your kind of special, welcome expertise, but through the human dimension, through some statutes you're asked quite often to explore a range which is forever getting larger.

1740

When we talk about limited liability partnerships, and others have done it, I wish you to bear with me. Question period for the past two weeks has been focused on one very special limited partnership — allegedly. You've heard it happen: \$48,000; the Latner Group; integrity has been put into question. In the minds of some citizens of Ontario, this kind of limited partnership does not bode well, does not augur well, does not represent what is best in terms of partnership. Ontarians generally are not part of that limited partnership.

Limited partnership: Go and ask the 126,000, the most educated group in the province, our educators. They had a partnership with the two previous governments. By and

large it was a healthy partnership, but as the government of the day moved up the food chain, starting with the welfare recipients — they have no partnership at all. They've been asked to go. They were given not a hand up but the back of the hand. It has been said that they choose that lifestyle. I know that New Democrats dislike poverty, but we don't hate the poor.

Limited partnership: For the rich and famous, for the wealthy they have a special partnership. As for the rest of us, if it's the poor against us, we have a liability partnership. We're left holding the bag from time to time. We're asked to pay for those. We're asked to pay for \$4.6 billion of new borrowing. That was done right before this bill that we just voted on, Bill 15. Of course we voted against it. We don't think it's right to borrow money when you have a recovery.

Your parents probably told you, Speaker — I don't know you that well — “Pay your mortgage, pay your debt first,” and then you can lower taxes. Would they listen? From the time they took office to the time they leave, the province will have accumulated an extra \$20 billion in liabilities, in debt. Yet, if they had taken the money from the tax cut that benefits you know who, they could have cleared up the debt.

I ask the professional chartered accountants, with all due respect for yourselves and for your tenure, if you were to advise the government when you open the books and see the opportunity that a recovery avails them, would you not — I know you can't answer but I know you wish to — advise them to pay down the debt? That's the way I was raised. I have one credit card — I'm of moderate means — and when I get near my \$5,000 limit — that's all they'll allow me, but that's another story — do I go and throw a big party or do I pay the card down? You're not from Harvard. I pay my debt down. That's how I stay alive. That's how I defend myself. It gives me a lot of latitude.

This government, \$20 billion more, add to it the liability, some \$32 billion, of Ontario Hydro, plus they have borrowed under the Canada pension plan provision, plus they will need another \$8 billion to \$10 billion to fix the mess of Darlington, another nuclear plant. I'm going to tell you, if I followed their philosophy, those people would have myself and my family in the poorhouse inside one generation.

They can't manage the books. They can't manage the boutique. If you can't do it, why don't you revert back to the previous government and we'll show you how to do it? Why should we have to wait until the next election? When you're this insolvent, when you truly lack the desire and perhaps the knowledge to administer, when you don't wish to listen to the bond rating agencies — simply put, in street parlance, if it came to a price-earnings ratio, they would be less than uno. If it came to a debt-equity ratio, what's happening to the cash flow, they would be out to lunch.

Why should we have to carry the guilt of those inefficiencies, of those people who cannot? The money is coming in, it's rolling in, yet the previous bill, under part

V, allows them to go and borrow \$4.6 billion. It's all a big coincidence, but the \$4.6 billion represents almost all five or six instalments of the tax cut. Why don't they put it against the deficit? Once they balance the books, then they could say, “Okay, we're paying \$9.5 billion worth of coupons.” Does it make more sense? You pay more for coupons than you pay for education in the province of Ontario. Does that make sense to you? The money's rolling in and they're \$20 billion more in debt than when they took office, and they're trying to convince the people that they're really good managers of prosperity. They're not.

At the same time, if you travel this vast and magnificent province, from the wonderful, diverse county of Renfrew — and I see that the dean of the House has blessed us with his presence today — to the shores of Hudson Bay to southeastern and southwestern Ontario, people are echoing the same sentiments. They can't see it on their paycheques, because they either make too little money to appreciate the tax cut or the Liberal federal government takes it away for employment insurance premiums and the Canada pension plan. You don't see it.

What you see is your limited partnerships. What you see is your schools, the heart of the community, your local hospitals; you see more user fees if you're a senior. You no longer look to the future with confidence. They tell you there is a recovery? Let's go for a little walk and you will see more poor people than ever before, because they have created a climate of winner take all. The rich get richer, the middle class gets eroded and the poor are left holding the bag.

That's not a recovery. Traditionally, a recovery meant that everybody benefited. When the cycle hit the positive, we all benefited. Now what we see is a growing gap between the haves, the middle class and the have-nots. If you adopt a policy that encourages this kind of endeavour, you do so at your own peril. It will matter not what your background is. What will matter is what your state of affairs is. If you miss out on this opportunity when times are prosperous, what will happen to us? The anxiety that the less fortunate, the marginalized and even the middle class are experiencing at this time will lead simply to fear when there is a recession or a relative slowdown. I fear that the likelihood of having the same philosophy applied to Ontarians will likely not be with us.

I'm disappointed that the government has not opted to pay down the deficit, to start addressing the debt, which is a burden to each and every one of us, but in lieu has chosen a quick fix to satisfy the appetite of the insatiable, for it does not benefit the middle class or the working poor nearly to the extent of those who are the most fortunate. A missed opportunity, and they will be judged harshly, for this is the legacy that this government has chosen. Oh, they will say to the electorate, “We're all seeking the same port, the same destination, it's just that philosophically we have chosen to take a different route to reach our destination.” It won't wash. It will not be good enough.

From time to time, in conclusion in this House, we have the opportunity to reach unanimity. You're very much

aware that in our great system, that of a constitutional monarchy, confrontation is often the order of the day. This is the way our system is. There is them and there is us. We tend to rotate in this House. This lot would wish to stop the rotation. I can assure you that we will need a lot more of the likes of Bill 6, a lot more cooperation among the parties, and while you're at it, why don't you dose the legislation with the human dimension, for nothing else matters.

Heck, if I may be so bold, if I can't look to the future with confidence, if it's not my place in the sun when revenues are coming in, when will it be my place in the sun? Today it's your day — cause for celebration, and why not? Cherish. The opportunity has passed and the

government has seized it. It's a good moment. Limited partnership for tomorrow for those who should be included in a partnership.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr Tsubouchi has moved third reading of Bill 6, An Act to amend the law with respect to Partnerships. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

It being nearly 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 tonight.

The House adjourned at 1755.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Wednesday 3 June 1998

Mercredi 3 juin 1998

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 3 June 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 3 juin 1998

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PREVENTION OF UNIONIZATION ACT (ONTARIO WORKS), 1998 LOI DE 1998 VISANT À EMPÊCHER LA SYNDICALISATION (PROGRAMME ONTARIO AU TRAVAIL)

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 22, An Act to Prevent Unionization with respect to Community Participation under the Ontario Works Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 22, Loi visant à empêcher la syndicalisation en ce qui concerne la participation communautaire visée par la Loi de 1997 sur le programme Ontario au travail.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I am very pleased to join the debate with respect to Bill 22. I would like to focus my remarks on the Labour Relations Act, because the bill specifically amends the Ontario Works Act, 1997, to provide that the Labour Relations Act, 1995, does not apply with respect to participation in a community participation activity. The bill also provides that "participants shall not join a trade union, bargain collectively or strike with respect to their community participation under Ontario Works."

The fundamental focus is that workfare is not meant to be a way of life. The purpose of workfare is to break the dependency on the welfare system, to get people back to work, to make a contribution to their community and help them become self-sufficient. I say, what is wrong with welfare recipients working or contributing to their community for their money? I think it's very valid that they contribute to the community and work for the welfare benefits.

The Labour Relations Act is not specifically designed to deal with workfare participants. In fact, the Labour Relations Act doesn't apply to some other persons either. I'd like to refer to the Labour Relations Act to deal with the type of individuals that it does not apply to, which is under section 3 of the Labour Relations Act. The act doesn't apply to, for example, a domestic employed in a private home. It doesn't apply to a person employed in agriculture, hunting or trapping. It doesn't apply to a member of a police force within the meaning of the Police Services Act. It doesn't apply to a member of the teachers'

bargaining unit as established by part 10.1 of the Education Act. It doesn't apply to a member of the Ontario Provincial Police force. It doesn't apply to an employee within the meaning of the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act. It doesn't apply to a provincial judge. It doesn't apply to a person employed as a labour mediator or a labour conciliator.

So the Labour Relations Act doesn't apply to everyone, and there's a specific reason it doesn't, either due to statutory mandate where the individuals are covered by another piece of legislation, or where it just doesn't make practical sense within the purposes of the Labour Relations Act to apply to that individual.

The unionization of workfare participants, in my frank opinion, is ridiculous. It seems inconsistent with the purposes of workfare and also inconsistent with respect to the Labour Relations Act to have an individual on workfare out on strike when they're there to get experience, to get off welfare, or by participating in the community activities to benefit the community and benefit themselves with respect to experience. It is also ridiculous to have a person on workfare walking a picket line, when they're supposed to be getting experience in the workforce or in community projects within their particular community. The unionization of workfare participants certainly isn't founded in the basis of what the Labour Relations Act is about.

It's also contrary to the purposes of the Labour Relations Act, which are found in section 2 of that act. The purposes of the Labour Relations Act are quite fundamental: (1) to facilitate collective bargaining between employers and trade unions that are freely designated representatives of the employees; (2) to recognize the importance of workplace parties adapting to change; (3) to promote flexibility, productivity and employee involvement in the workplace; (4) to encourage communication between employers and employees in the workplace; (5) to recognize the importance of economic growth as a foundation for mutually beneficial relations among employers, employees and trade unions; (6) to encourage cooperative participation of employers and trade unions in resolving workplace issues; (7) to promote the expeditious resolution of workplace disputes.

The purpose of the application of the act obviously is to deal with individuals and employers who are going to have a permanent and long-term relationship, in all practicality their relationship within the workforce. In terms of Ontario Works, the purpose is not to set up a permanent dependency on workfare. Obviously, the objective is to get

individuals on welfare back to work. That's the purpose of Ontario Works. It's not to put them into a unionized environment so they won't be able to work.

You have to look at what the Liberals and the NDP are about, and the labour leaders whom they support, in wanting to kill workfare. That's really what they're about: They want to kill it. I have to ask why. Why do they want to kill workfare, which helps people get experience in the workplace so they can get out of the welfare cycle and get a job? It's basically to deal with the single interest and the focus of what they're about. They're about big government and they're about maintaining the welfare system. They're also about big unions and catering to their powers and their single interest in terms of maintaining unionized control over workplaces. Basically, they're about big government, the welfare system and big unions.

The effect of killing workfare, if the Labour Relations Act applied to Ontario Works participants, would be very significant. The effect certainly would be a disincentive to employers to give experience and training. The pressure of the big unions has been on the employers to make sure they're not going to follow through and help people out, give them a helping hand up. If they can put enough pressure not only on these employers but also on the groups that support the employers, for example, the United Way and other groups they've targeted, then Ontario Works isn't going to happen. Perhaps its their perception that that's going to protect their union membership. I think that's a very shortsighted view.

The other effect of trying to kill workfare by having the Labour Relations Act apply, because that's what the NDP and the Liberals want, is that it would result in no experience and no training being given to these individuals who are going to participate in Ontario Works. That would obviously result in the continuation of the cycle, the permanent dependency of the individuals on welfare on the welfare system. That's what it's going to result in. Everybody knows that workfare is not to be a way of life; also, welfare is not to be a way of life. Ontario Works, workfare, is a step in the process of getting back into the community in terms of contributing to the community and also working within the community.

If the Labour Relations Act applied, the other effect on workfare would be that it would kill the opportunity for persons on welfare for a better life. That's essentially what it's about. The best social program you can have for anybody is for them to get a job. If we can help the people who are on welfare get a job, that's going to improve their own life and it's also going to be of benefit to the community. Ontario workfare is a win-win situation.

Bill 22 has a very sharp, telescopic focus, and the focus is to make sure that Ontario Works works for the people it's designed to help. It's not designed to help big unions and it's not designed to promote big government.

1840

I'd like to refer to an article from within my riding, from the *Barrie Examiner*, dated May 20, 1998. I'll just take some excerpts from the editorial, which is their

opinion. It's entitled, "Workfare Not a Way of Life." In that article it says:

"There's no logic to unionizing workfare participants, but that's just what some labour leaders want in Ontario.... Dubbed workfare, it is designed to help people break their dependency on the welfare system, to get back to work, make a contribution to their community and help them become self-sufficient...."

"Who can blame the government for taking steps to pass a law which would ban unionizing workfare participants?"

It strikes the editor as "ridiculous to have welfare recipients actually on strike walking picket lines.

"Union leaders and anyone else who disagrees with the Tories' welfare reforms need a refresher course on a few things.

"This province's social safety net, including welfare, was originally designed for those who desperately needed help, people whose unemployment insurance had expired, families without a bread-earner.

"It's so children don't have to go hungry, seniors need not be neglected.

"Welfare was never intended to be a way of life for a generation of Ontario residents. But that's what happened in this province: welfare paid better than some jobs."

It also struck me as incredible that during the booming times of the late 1980s, when the Liberal government was in power, welfare was increasing during that period. It's just phenomenal that that would happen, and why? Because the government of that time set up a welfare system that made it better not to work than to work. The changes this government has made with respect to welfare have been designed to make sure that people get off welfare and break the cycle of dependency. Sure, this government enacted some reforms with respect to decreasing the amount of welfare benefits, but we're still 10% above the average for every other province in this country. Those are the welfare benefits provided by this province.

We're also making sure through Ontario Works that individuals who happen to be on welfare — and we have great compassion for the individuals who are in that predicament. That's why we have the welfare system we've put in place, to make sure they are given an opportunity to get back into the workforce. Anyone who has been involved in that program would say it's in their best interest to get retrained or get training, to get experience so they can get another job. That's what it's all about.

It's also fundamental that individuals on welfare shouldn't be in a better position than people who work. I think that's a fundamental principle that we have to recognize in terms of making the system fair to everybody.

Getting back to the article in the *Barrie Examiner*, it says, "Welfare was never intended to be a way of life for a generation of Ontario residents. But that's what happened in this province; welfare paid better than some jobs.

"So the Tories cut welfare cheques by 22%, made it more difficult to qualify, and introduced workfare as a

method of reintroducing, at the very least, some welfare recipients back into the work environment.

"There's also little doubt...many Ontario residents, like the idea of some welfare recipients working for their money.

"But like welfare, workfare is not intended to be a way of life. It doesn't need to be organized by labour."

That's a very fundamental premise, that the Labour Relations Act does not apply to Ontario workfare participants. The Labour Relations Act was designed for very specific purposes. The purposes are outlined in the act. Also, the act doesn't apply to everyone, so this is not something new. The act has a very specific focus in terms of whom it is to apply to.

If big unions want to organize people who are going to be on Ontario workfare, you have to ask why. It's basically to kill their opportunity for a better life. That's what big unions are about in this process.

This type of program, Ontario Works, designed to help people, is also dealing with the welfare system as it was previously constructed, a big-government, big-welfare system, not responsive to the needs of the people who really need it in terms of getting back into the workplace and getting a job.

It's just amazing that the NDP and the Liberals believe that Ontario Works is best under the Labour Relations Act. It's hard to believe that they would think that's the way Ontario Works should be run. But that's what they think. That's why they're opposed to this piece of legislation.

In closing, I'd like to voice my support and approval of Bill 22. I think it's a very fundamental change. It's very unfortunate that it even has to be passed, but it's obvious that the big unions have made it a focus to kill the program, and the other parties, which support this approach by big unions, want to make sure that the welfare system continues in its present mode, because they like big government and they also like big unions. I'd like to conclude and wait for the next speaker for the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments?

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I'm rather surprised that my Liberal colleagues seem to have decided not to comment on the fairly provocative statements of the member for Brampton Centre.

Mr Tascona: Simcoe Centre.

Mrs Boyd: I'm sorry. I knew it was "Centre." I always get the "Centre" part right, because nobody ever gets it right for me.

I must say that the member is very good at presenting the line of this government around this particular bill. When he speaks, however, he does raise questions for the people of Ontario. For example, he talks about people on welfare being paid better than for some jobs. Of course, that brings us to talking about minimum wage. This is the government that has frozen minimum wage. Anybody who looks at the relationship between welfare and minimum wage knows that part of the reason to have relatively high minimum wage is to ensure that those who are looking for

work are attracted to work as opposed to welfare assistance.

This government, of course, wants to drive down the province's ability to meet the basic needs of people and to try to force people into work. That is the issue here: This is forced labour. This is forced labour, which we as Canadians have said is inappropriate in any other country in the world. This government thinks it's appropriate for them to legislate forced labour, to deny the international human right that people have to join and participate in trade unions. This government thinks its program is above international law and above the whole aspect of human rights. That is why we object.

1850

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I'd like to congratulate the member for Simcoe Centre on his comments with respect to this piece of legislation. I must say, the member for London Centre is consistent in her comments, as she always is, and I totally disagree with the remarks she has made.

The member for Simcoe Centre does express the position of this government and how we're trying to get people who have, for a whole slew of reasons, formed a way of life on welfare. Most of them, almost all of them, want to get off this way of life. Most of them want to get a job. Most of them want to find a way of getting educated. Most of them want to start in a whole new process for themselves and their families. Many of them are single mothers who simply do not want to continue that way of life they have been leading, and they're locked in it.

So this process that our government has introduced is to encourage people to work, to educate them. The purpose of this bill doesn't come close to what the member for London Centre and other members of her party have suggested, which is to kill jobs — far from it. It's to encourage people to work. It's to encourage people to become educated. Its whole design is to get people off welfare and to encourage people to learn other aspects of holding a job, of obtaining a job and all the various ins and outs that are needed for that type of life.

I congratulate the member for Simcoe Centre in making his comments with respect to this legislation. I encourage all members of this House to support that bill. I particularly encourage the New Democratic Party members to change their position, because this legislation is to save jobs, to find people jobs and help them work.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I'd like to thank the previous speaker for talking about the real reason for this bill, which is to save jobs. But the jobs we're out to save here, of course, are of the Tory members who fell asleep during committee and forgot to vote for this in the first place. This is the sleeping beauty bill. We're here because some Tory members were so distracted, napping and otherwise, that they didn't follow through on their government's intention in the first place. We're dealing once more with the bumbling around of a government that couldn't shoot straight to save their whatever. In this case, we're saving some jobs, I guess. We're covering up the miscues of some of the members here.

Unfortunately, we can understand why that has become a habit for this government and some of the back bench, because they don't really appreciate what some of what their work is about. We heard some of that from the member for Simcoe Centre when he talked about dealing with people on welfare as if there was a disincentive when, before the welfare cuts took place, people were paid \$3.84 an hour and now they get \$3 an hour. When the member talks about receiving more money than minimum wage and making it a way of life — only if you have young children; that's the only way you could qualify to get welfare that paid anywhere close to minimum wage. Instead, for three bucks an hour most of the people affected by the so-called Ontario Works provisions — the only work we're creating here is for a lot of bureaucrats to create pretend programs on behalf of this government, because this is just a propaganda piece for this government rather than a genuine intention to put people back to work.

If you look at where real back-to-work programs have been created anywhere in North America — you can find the most right-wing Republican regime in the States and they at least have programs that actually put people back to work. Here, the preoccupation of this government instead is with propaganda that tries to pile on the harm they've already done to people on assistance.

There are indeed barriers for people to get back to work when on social assistance, and it starts with attitudes, erroneous attitudes of the type that were propagated here tonight by the member for Simcoe Centre, which I'll have an opportunity to comment on further.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity for a two-minute response to the member for Simcoe Centre. I noted that he used in his comments the phrase "sharp, telescopic focus," that that's all this legislation is and nobody should really worry about it; it's just a sharp, telescopic focus. The problem, of course, is that the telescope is mounted on a high-powered rifle, and people who used to get assistance and help in this province are now about to become the further victims of this government and their absolutely unacceptable legislation.

When my colleague the member for London Centre talked about the fact that this is forced labour, I heard the reaction from members across the way. That's exactly what this is. When you tell someone, "Your sustenance, your existence, your ability to have enough money to buy food, provide shelter and provide the necessities of life will only be there if you work and you perform the work that we tell you," guess what? That's forced labour. That's not that big a step away from camps.

Now, I knew I'd get a groan out of some of you and that you'd say, "Oh, God, how could that be?" Well, you know what? If someone had suggested 10 years ago that there'd be a government elected that would take 22% of the income away from the poorest of the poor and then force those people in poverty to work to get that money, they'd have made the same groan you're making right now. The fact of the matter is that the darkest days con-

ceivable ever are now here upon us. I don't think it's beyond the depth that you can drop to where we wouldn't see camps in this province. You just keep marching forward, step by step, into the abyss.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Simcoe Centre, you have two minutes.

Mr Tascona: It's obvious that the NDP members for London Centre and Hamilton Centre have a very different view. The member for Hamilton Centre talks about a high-powered rifle. If it was a union high-powered rifle, it would be all right. That member, all he supports is big unions. The members for London Centre and Hamilton Centre talk about forced labour. That is complete nonsense. Why don't they get realistic and focus on the pattern of what the people want? The people want to go out and get a job. We're trying to get them to get experience and also be involved in the community so they can get another job. They support welfare as a way of life, because that's all they know. All they know is that big government, big union, it's all right. "Get that big union gun out, because it's all right. We used it last time, and we're going to use it again." A vote for the NDP and the Liberals is big government and big unions.

So the member for York South pops up. He says, "Well, it's a disincentive, and look what happens in the right-wing governments of the US." But, as usual, the Liberals don't even offer an alternative, because they don't have one. They look all over the world and they say: "Well, what's out there? We don't know what's out there." The facts of the matter are that in some parts of the United States they do have welfare. But they also cut the people off in two years if they don't get a job. The bottom line is that this government has shown compassion. They say: "We want to help you. We're not going to cut off the benefits; we just want you to get out there and get a job." What's wrong with that? But the member for York South thinks that's a disincentive; it's a disincentive to get out there and get some experience in the community, because he believes in big government, he believes in welfare as a way of life.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Kennedy: It is with pleasure that I'd like to thank the member for London South for giving us this opportunity to have this debate today by apparently napping off during the original debate and not being here to present his vote and have this taken care of the first time, because it allows us to hang out, for the public of Ontario to see, some of the hypocrisy of this government, a government that would pretend to do one thing and actually do another. Certainly in its attitude and its actions, because this is an action this government proposes to take, it isolates a little piece of that hypocrisy that makes it a little bit easier for people to understand.

For example, if the government really wished to put people back to work, they could; they have an alternative. All they need to do is create an incentive for people to employ people on welfare at minimum wage. They could do that, they could pay people minimum wage, part-time jobs. They could do that within the labour framework that

exists in this province. People would be earning something for their money, there would be all those chances for experience and there would be the chance for people to be able to work. But that's not what this government is doing.

Instead, this government has chosen to proceed down a different path, the path of just creating propaganda, rather than really digging in and doing the work of government and trying to solve a problem. The real truth is that this sleeping beauty amendment has nothing to do with putting people back to work, it has nothing to do with improving welfare. The hypocrisy of this government was shown in its early days, when it refused, when approached by various groups, to allow people that were on social assistance to volunteer in their own communities. This government actually maintained it to be illegal for those who are on social assistance to be part of community enterprises. In fact, people's welfare was docked. They were harassed away from the very kind of effort these groups talk about. The organization I used to run used to have 200 and 300 people on social assistance providing voluntary assistance, recognizing a very strong will to contribute back to society.

1900

But this government, rather than taking the view of how to really assist people and benefit society, has decided to adopt measures which are completely out of keeping with the visions we have here in Canada. This government has decided that it is going to take away rights from the people who are on social assistance. Why would this government, which purports to be a friend of the little guy, take away rights that are in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the freedom to associate, to be able to join things like trade unions or any other organization? Why would the Mike Harris government want to grab that away from a particular group of people?

The only answer is that it did such a bad job designing its legislation to deal with people on welfare that it needs to be covered up. In other words, it couldn't prove under labour legislation that what it's doing is hiring or putting people to work for \$3 an hour. It's not prepared to do it through the front door, so instead through the back door it wants to change the rules. Why, otherwise, would they take away the ability of people on welfare, if it was proven, if it was demonstrated that what they were being forced to do or what they were being asked to do was part of a workplace environment, why would they not have those same rights?

It goes to the heart of the hypocrisy put forward by this government, because workfare isn't about working. We have, on the one hand, jobs available for people and, on the other hand, there are volunteer opportunities. What this government has pretended and has told the people of Ontario, misled the people of Ontario, is that they can create something in between, something they can compel people to do that isn't volunteerism and isn't a job. The real fact is, and it's good the Minister of Community and Social Services is in the House, because this minister has not told the truth — oh, sorry; pardon me — has not told the truth about —

The Acting Speaker: I think you realize your mistake. Would you apologize, please, and withdraw it?

Mr Kennedy: Yes. Thank you, Mr Speaker. The minister has not told us the whole story in terms of the ability of people on welfare —

Mr Tilson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I did not hear the member withdraw his statement, where he accused the minister of lying.

The Acting Speaker: I did hear him withdraw. He withdrew the word. I asked him to withdraw, and he did.

Mr Kennedy: Mr Speaker, I'm happy to withdraw a second time particularly for the Conservative members, because we understand that we're here because of that same affliction of members of the government who wouldn't pay attention, who've fallen asleep or otherwise. If that was at all an issue for anyone in this House, I want to repeat that, because that's why we're here tonight, because a Conservative member slept in committee and this bill didn't get passed the first time. But we appreciate the opportunity to go over the ground where this government, in its usual practice, has tried to snow the people of this province, that somehow it's possible to have something that's not work and is not volunteer activity, it's something else.

When you look at the actual programs across the province, what are people doing? In fact, people are participating in what this government calls workfare, but it is not what this bill is about. It's not about people taking part in forced community participation. In fact, very little of that is going on across the province. If you talk to anybody who works in a welfare office, if you talk to anybody who works in a community agency, the simple fact is that this government hasn't generated any of that activity. They're pretending that that's what they're up to, and most of what they're reporting to us is that workfare consists of people actually on their own going out and looking for work.

The surprise, and I'm sure it's a surprise to the members opposite, is that that's what people were doing before. The original legislation around welfare required people to be looking for work as a condition of receiving social assistance. Where is the proof of that? When this government brought in its original legislation, it actually didn't have to change any of the laws. They didn't have to make any changes, because that requirement has always been there. What we have here instead is a government bumbling around, trying to create the illusion that somehow it's doing something different in terms of welfare, and it's not. It really is not doing anything in terms of creating new opportunities for people to be out there. In fact, it has cancelled some of the opportunities that used to exist. It used to be possible, for example, for people looking for work to get money for transportation to be able to look for jobs. No longer does that exist. It used to be possible for people to participate in the community and not be penalized. That doesn't exist any more.

Instead, this government is working in direct contradiction to what at least some of its members try to have us believe it's already about. In fact, I wouldn't be very far

wrong to say that there are probably fewer people participating in the community than there were before the government brought forward its measures, because this government has refused to really understand what is required by people who are on social assistance and how they can best be helped and assisted to realize their potential. The hypocrisy started with not allowing them to volunteer. It was compounded by a government taking away the very small amounts of money for transportation, sometimes for clothing, sometimes for grooming allowances, to be able to allow people to take part in workplace opportunities that used to exist. They took that money away. Again, two steps directly in contradiction.

Then they claimed that there is some kind of threat of this activity being unionized. I put it to you, the only way that people on social assistance could be unionized is if they were participating in actual workplace activities. If they are actually working, then they deserve the same protection under the law that every other group of people has. It has taken this particular brand of Reform-Tory government to say: "We're such an all-knowing, all-powerful government that we're going to take away the rights of these people. They're such a threat to society, they're such a danger, that we're going to take away their rights in case we made a mistake here and we're actually putting people in working situations." There is no evidence that there is any impediment to people out there being able to get out there and work except for the rules and regulations of this government.

We heard, as a point of justification for this bill, that it really is a reflection of the kind feelings, of the compassion that this government feels towards people on social assistance. We would certainly not take away or deduct from anybody in this House who has those feelings, but at some point this government and the members who support this government have to be judged on their actions, and they have to be judged on how they've punished people who are at the most vulnerable point in their lives, because, after all, the people who have been damaged by what this government has done are the people who live in families that are broken up, people who are sometimes in single-parent situations. Children make up 40% of the people who had food snatched off their plate by this government in its first year of office.

When this government tries to pretend, tries to console itself that somehow taking money away, changing that basic amount of social assistance from \$3.84 an hour to \$3 an hour, was somehow justified, that it's 10% higher than other provinces, what this government and what these members either don't tell themselves or are prepared to try to tell the public and hope that they'll believe is that the cost of living in every size of community in Ontario is 20% to 30%, and in larger centres 50%, higher when it comes to the cost of rent, the cost of food and the other basic necessities of life.

If this government would submit to a survey that would prove that the costs of living are obtainable by the people on social assistance, then we would be able to support its measures on welfare, but it won't do that, because some-

where in those benches people know, they appreciate, they understand that the reality is that they took dollars that were essential for the upkeep of health and wellbeing away from the most vulnerable people in this province.

There are only three ways that people end up on social assistance; one is by the family breaking down. It happens, it's a condition of our society, and people in that situation, particularly when young children are often involved, deserve our support. Our smart support would allow them to sustain that family unit in the best shape possible. In fact, we might not even ask them to strip down assets the way they do today. We might actually give them some ability to not go through the greatest amount of trauma possible. Instead, we have a previous bill from this government that actually inflicts harm on those arrangements, that destabilizes those young families trying to put their lives back together. For some reason, this government feels it can justify taking on people in that condition.

Another way people can get on social assistance is to do the dastardly thing of getting ill, of being sick, of having a disability, of having a very, very human condition. For that reason, this government has decided that people should be punished, that when they find themselves vulnerable, somehow we should put them in conditions where they can't afford their rent.

1910

In major centres, some 75% of the people who depend on this government, not for their livelihood, not for the definition of who they are, but for a little bit of assistance to be able to get on their feet, find themselves having to take from their food money to pay for their rent. That's a condition created by the members of this government. It has forced people either to live in unutterably bad conditions or, because they can't find accommodation they can afford in any condition, to simply go without.

We've had an increased incidence in the use of food banks and the need for people — and this is not a reflection on them — to have to beg for part of the food they need to feed their families.

That was created not because the economy became worse. That's not the case. We heard a reference from the learned member for Simcoe Centre about how during the boom times people kept going on social assistance. If the member for Simcoe Centre would trouble himself to add slightly to his great body of learning, he would know that the cost of rent rose dramatically for people who were in marginalized positions during the boom times. It was only that factor that put people on social assistance and made it so difficult for them. Do we have that understanding and respect extended by this government? No, we don't.

I challenge each speaker to follow, each member of this House, to take a very simple program, those who feel that people on social assistance had too much money to live on before they took it away. There's a program that's been developed called Walking in Their Shoes. It invites you and enables you to live a week on social assistance, to live for a week on the amount of money that's available to people. It doesn't do more than that; it just asks you to go through that experience. Do it yourselves. Demonstrate

the fact that there is surplus out there, that somehow the people who are getting by on \$3 an hour need to be held back from their job opportunities, need to have special rules passed against them because somehow there is something wrong with them.

Before you do those things, before you condemn and put down people whose families have broken up, who have become sick or ill or who have lost a job, who have perpetrated those things against society, try and live the way they do. Try and have a sense that the money from welfare, the programs from government, are not the central fact in these people's lives. Their own ingenuity, their own determination are what make them come together as a family, push themselves forward and find work.

What government should do is give a reasonable amount of assistance to people for the time they need it and get out of the way. But this government won't get out of the way. It keeps attacking people who are on social assistance because it feels it gives it a benefit in terms of votes. It plays to a part of society that would like to have someone to blame for the unfairness this government compounds with its unfair tax cuts, the way it has taken away services from people, the way it leaves some people with the insecurity of having to lay in hospital hallways. In places I've been around the province, hospitals in each of these members' ridings, instead of actually receiving people in their emergency rooms and hustling them into the beds they need, have created a system that allows them to lay not for hours, but for days, in emergency room hallways. They are unable to depend on their government.

I submit that the preoccupation of this government with punishing and otherwise disempowering people on welfare of their benefits, of their rights under the law, represents that same flawed thinking. We cannot depend on this government or apparently the members of this government to stand up for the average person out there and make sure they have basic services. Certainly the Ombudsman of this province told us that. She told us that this government isn't giving us more for less; this government is bungling around instead. This government can't run the trains on time. This government can't deliver services. They can't make the hospitals work. They can't make the welfare system work. They can't make anything work, except to deliver a tax cut to the people to whom they feel beholden.

That is ultimately what this is about. This is what this brand of Reform-Tory feels it has to deliver to certain people. It's got very little to do with people on assistance. For those people on social assistance who are watching, you really need to feel that this government is not vilifying you. This government can't do that. This is only one version of government.

The most heartening thing we can say to the people on social assistance who have to contend with all the new rules this government has applied to them, that has taken away all the enabling benefits, the small amounts of money that actually helped them create some normalcy in their lives, create some stability and climb the stairs back to some level of self-reliance — because this government

wouldn't trouble itself to pause long enough to look at the different kinds of programs we need, the different approaches for each type of person on social assistance, it has thrown that out completely. To people on social assistance, don't look at that as reflecting the attitudes of the people of Ontario, because it doesn't. Just because things weren't working in the welfare system before doesn't mean this government has a licence to attack people on assistance.

That's where this government is going to get its comeuppance: from the fact that it doesn't run programs in the public interest. It isn't able to produce the results it's talking about. The numbers it has produced for people on so-called workfare are completely erroneous. Walk into any of your local welfare offices and talk to them about who is actually on workfare and you'll find out very quickly that almost nobody is. Almost nobody is actually part of this government's vaunted program because they haven't been able to create it. They came in with this comic book revolution, 21 pages with pictures, and didn't actually know what they were doing. That's becoming apparent enough. Because less than 20% of the population ever finds the need to depend on social assistance, it's important for the rest of the people, who are concerned that rights not be taken away from a class of society simply because they find themselves economically disadvantaged.

Some 32% of the people we helped at the food bank during the last year I was there had some college or university education. Their average time at their last job was six years. They don't need lessons from the members of this House or from anyone else on how to get work. These are people who made an average of 200 job applications in the last year. They don't need the petty-minded pushing and prodding of people who won't stop long enough to learn who they are and what they really need to get back into the workforce. They don't need that.

If the members of this House would stand up here in unison and pass judgement with this bill on these people, they should at least take up my challenge and spend some time walking in the shoes of the people you're going to pass this law over.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Christopherson: I want to thank the member for York South for his comments. It's not often that I agree almost totally with a member of the Liberal caucus —

Mr Bernard Grandmaitre (Ottawa East): Almost?

Mr Christopherson: Almost, yes. It's a little early for miracles today.

But I certainly agree with the main thrust of what he was saying. In part he was saying that this is a government of blame, that they very much want to isolate segments of society. They don't use it so much any more — maybe this part of the plan has already gone through — but remember how often in the early days they would talk about special interests? Anybody in this province who felt they had something to dialogue with or ask of the government or, God forbid, demand in terms of their democratic rights as citizens of Ontario were just special interests. As long as

you could be labelled a "special interest," you were fair game, because that somehow suggested that there was one segment of society that wanted something that everyone else was going to have to pay for.

They certainly did that with people on social assistance. Quite frankly, during the election they showed it in spades. Remember the ads? They only had two basic TV ads. One ad talked about employment equity. They called it a quota law, of course, leaving the impression that if you were not born in Canada or white or male, then you were clearly going to take away someone's legitimate job. Unfortunately, they were relatively successful in getting that message across. The other one was work for welfare, somehow suggesting that anyone and everyone who is on social assistance is, by virtue of that fact, robbing the system. It's important that we in the opposition take a stand that dispels that. This is not about us and them. This is about building a society to take care of those who don't have as much as others in the province.

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Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): I listened with interest to both of the prior speeches. I'm not surprised that the member for Hamilton Centre agrees with the member for York South. At least the member for Hamilton Centre has said and his party has always said that they don't believe in workfare. It's clear that neither does the member for York South; he doesn't believe in workfare either.

Interestingly enough, his party, in the Ontario Liberal plan, does believe in workfare. In fact, they campaigned on it. It's right in their party platform, on page 16. I guess I'm not the last person who should criticize somebody for going against party policy, but it's clear that the Liberal Party policy is that they support workfare. Let me quote: "However, when people who are able to work refuse to participate in any of these programs, they will receive only a basic allowance that reflects the national average...." So if people refused, they were going to be penalized and punished.

The policy book goes on further to say: "Work Experience Activity: Among the worst parts of being on welfare can be the isolation and loss of self-esteem that go with it." I agree with that, and I think all the Conservative members of the House do. "Work experience activities can give people a chance to upgrade their skills, gain experience that will help in a job search, and interact with a wide variety of people."

I agree with all that. I think all Conservative members agree with that proposition. The member for York South's party agrees with that, obviously, because that was their policy, or are they flip-flopping? What is their policy? Who knows what their policy is? Perhaps the member for York South ran for the wrong party. At least the member for Hamilton Centre is being consistent, whereas the member for York South obviously hasn't been. If he is being consistent with party policy, then what is it?

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I know my friends opposite like to wave that red book so much that it's actually turning orange now, by the look of it. But I have

to tell my friends opposite, they'll have to search very, very hard to find anything in there that would even speak of taking away a charter right from a group in our community.

The bill before us forbids ordinary citizens of Ontario who happen to be applying for welfare, not because they wish to but because they have to — they have to apply for welfare to feed their kids, to keep a roof over their heads. Because the members have passed a law forcing these folks into a program called workfare, now they're bringing in legislation to deny these very citizens of Ontario their ability to associate.

The Bible says that the poor are always with us, and in all these years no one has yet successfully organized a union among the poor. No one has. But this government has the bright idea, "Oh, we should ban this." I'd like to know. Every now and again there are letters to the editor from the poor complaining that they have to pay so much for rent they have no money left over for food. So I'm thinking the next bill will be to ban the freedom of expression from the poor so they don't write these letters and upset the people who pay the cheques for all of this.

I challenge the minister who is sitting here today. Tell us you didn't get a memorandum from your legal staff saying that this did not violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Stand up and tell this House that.

Mrs Boyd: I seldom agree with anything a Conservative says, but I agree with the member for Wentworth North that there is nothing to choose between the Liberals and the Conservatives in terms of what they brought to the people the last time around.

Some of these latecomers, some of the new people in the Liberal benches, are saying very clearly that they don't agree with the policy of mandatory opportunity that their party brought to the people last time around. I would suggest to you that that's because they felt they were anointed last time around and they were going to face some of the real difficulties there are.

No one in this place, I don't believe one of us, believes that those who are on welfare would not rather be working. All of us know that. The problem with this whole thing is that no one has to be coerced to work. They have to be given real opportunity. The problem with the bill originally that forced people to work, Bill 142, and the problem with this bill is that this government believes and acts as if people on welfare don't want to take advantage of every opportunity that's there. They do. That's the biggest problem.

As soon as you make something like this mandatory, your underlying assumption has to be that unless it's mandatory, people will not take advantage of opportunities. Labour unions did not object to the kind of opportunities we offered through Jobs Ontario. In fact, they worked side by side as mentors for people in Jobs Ontario, and the same number of people got involved as are going to be involved by forced labour.

The Acting Speaker: The member for York South, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr Kennedy: We hear members grasping not at their own opinions but at past documents to try to justify what

they would do today. And it's amazing what a high level of sanctimony will do for the NDP, who themselves had a draft document when in government that would have brought into play exactly these kinds of provisions I consulted with that government —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. It's getting out of control.

Mr Kennedy: The previous government would have cut welfare rates. They heavily contemplated that.

So we have flawed thinking, which is not the preserve of any party, but there is a party in power today that would perpetuate the worst version of how to deal with people on assistance, because they won't take the time, they won't put the energy into actually understanding the people we're dealing with: a million people in this province who find themselves left out of the economic mainstream, not through their own fault.

Until we start with that approach, until we understand that there's only a slight amount needed, a little bit of a push, a little extra to enable to get people to get there — the average time that people are on social assistance is only nine months. We're not talking about configuring people's lives here. Only nine months is how long it used to be, and it's shortening. The big trick this government did was to not let people on welfare, to change categories and push people off, and when they had a review panel — as we found out yesterday, there is no appeal any more in Mike Harris's Ontario. You can't get your rights secured.

There is no trick to it. Every month people on assistance pick themselves up and put themselves off welfare, and all you have done, in some mean-minded kind of way, is not let people back on. Until you put legislation in front of this House that recognizes the dignity and the worth of the people on social assistance, you're still hypocrites for moving this bill.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think it is inappropriate and unparliamentary that the previous speaker refers to members of this House as hypocrites.

The Acting Speaker: The word "hypocrite" has been used quite frequently tonight against the government. But this time I think he was addressing it to you, and I don't accept that. I would ask the member to apologize. I know he will.

Mr Kennedy: I will, Mr Speaker. I meant it to be a general statement about the government. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Just withdraw.

Mr Kennedy: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr Christopherson: I think you're right, Speaker. The word "hypocrite" has been used an awful lot, probably more during the term of this government than any other.

But before I leave the point and move on to the focus here, "mandatory opportunity" really is something that people ought to remember. I did agree with the comments of the member for York South, and I suspect that if I re-read the Hansards I wouldn't feel any need to change that.

That, however, does not in any way change the fact that the party he is a member of ran the last time on that platform because it was perceived to be popular to go after people who are on social assistance, but they didn't want to use the same harsh kind of language that the Tories were using so they came up with "mandatory opportunity." It really is insulting to suggest that that is somehow different. I suspect that's why things ended up the way they did.

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We have pointed out that when we start talking in the ramp-up to election — and it's coming; we can see that in the comments and in what's happening — once again there's that kind of slippery, mushy sort of positioning, which this time says, "Yes, we're going to reinvest in social assistance and in health care and in the education system," but nowhere do they show us where the money is going to come from or how that's going to be paid for. So again they are trying to get into the most populist slipstream they can find.

During this whole debate I think we ought to remember that had there been a different outcome, and had the Liberals been elected the government instead of the Tories, there still would have been some very dark version of exactly what's happening here. I think the member for York South knows that, as do most of the people of Ontario.

Now to the bill, specifically, Bill 22. I remember commenting when this was introduced how terrifying it was to see any bill, any piece of legislation that was proposed to become the law of the land, that started with the words, "An Act to Prevent Unionization." In this case it goes on to say, "with respect to Community Participation under the Ontario Works Act," but none the less it's a bill that says "An Act to Prevent Unionization."

We know from listening to the member for Simcoe Centre earlier, when he kept using over and over the term "the big unions," "the big unions" — well, guess what, folks? It was the big unions that brought you the weekend. It was the big unions that brought you workplace health and safety. It was the big unions that brought you the concept of overtime, of seniority rights, of being treated decently in the workplace. If you want to play that game, how about acknowledging the contribution they've made?

We know what their next step is. The next step in that argument, when you've got them trapped with their own arguments in the corner on this, is always: "Okay, yes, there was a time when they were necessary, but not now. They have no relevance now." I have heard that now for almost a quarter of a century and I suspect it will be there as long as there's a right-winger breathing who's trying to find an excuse to do exactly what this government wants and is doing, and that is to go after the value of labour.

Obviously, the first thing you need to do when you do that is to go after the labour movement, because the labour movement, quite frankly, is what brought about most of the things that make this a great place to live. If they didn't do it directly in their collective agreements, then they did it by putting pressure on governments to put it

into law, and if it didn't affect workers in the workplace, it did in terms of their environment, social services, health and education. Every time you look at the cutting edge of those issues or, under the Tory government, defending those programs, guess who's always there? It's the labour movement.

Yes, I come from the labour movement. I also come from the working world. There was a time when I didn't understand, because it's not taught in our schools — I had to live it and learn it myself to fully appreciate it — what it meant to have those rights. I'm going to talk about those. I know Professor Adams's writings have been mentioned here earlier. They deserve to be repeated and I'm going to do that. But first I want to be sure we all understand what this says.

It's not the length of the bill that's so deadly, it's what it says. It's a very small bill. Of course it doesn't take an awful lot to say, "Hey you, you don't have any rights." That doesn't take an awful lot of words. The length of it is by no means any kind of reflection of its importance.

What does the bill say? It says:

"73.1(1) The Labour Relations Act, 1995" — which, by the way, you brought in without one minute of public consultation; rammed through a brand-new bill written by lawyers outside this place which made scabs legal again and did a whole host of things, but that's the law referred to — "does not apply with respect to participation in a community participation activity under this act.

"(2) Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), under the Labour Relations Act, 1995 no person shall do any of the following with respect to his or her participation in a community participation activity." It's three little things.

"1. Join a trade union.

"2. Have the terms and conditions under which he or she participates determined through collective bargaining." My God, how sinful.

"3. Strike."

Sometimes we get so focused — the member for Simcoe Centre talked about his sharp, telescopic focus — sometimes we get just a little too focused and we forget to put things in the context of issues that we, as Ontarians and Canadians, would ordinarily die to protect.

Professor Roy Adams, emeritus professor of industrial relations, McMaster University, who cares a lot about this issue and is an expert in the field, points out that Canada is a signatory to the ILO — that's the International Labour Organization — convention 87 on freedom of association. We are a signatory to that international document. This bill was forwarded to them for their consideration, and although they said they couldn't comment on it specifically, they did ask that we consider what has been said by the ILO and their relevant conventions, and specifically their committee of experts and the committee on freedom of association regarding the right to organize, article 2 of convention 87, which states, "Workers and employers without distinction whatsoever shall have the right to establish and, subject only to the rules of the

organization concerned, to join organizations of their own choosing without previous authorization."

If it were any other context from anywhere else in the world, most of these Tories would be on their hind legs giving motherhood speeches about human rights and the fact that workers ought to be given the rights that all are entitled to around the world, and that it's shameful that this — fill in the space — government over — somewhere else in the world — is doing this, and aren't they awful and aren't they undemocratic. It would happen. It happens every day. And yet right now, here in this Legislature, in one of the greatest democracies of history is a bill that goes exactly against a document that we signed into and that we would support in any other nation around the world.

What else? This is about the concept — and it's always this government saying one thing and doing another — of freedom of association.

Professor Adams goes on to say that freedom of association is one of our most well-established international human rights. I'm going to list all the organizations — world bodies — that include freedom of association as part of their constitution or covenants or principles; it's contained in their basic declaration: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the covenants of the United Nations; the constitution of the International Labour Organization; the World Conference on Human Rights; the World Social Summit; the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; the World Trade Organization; and the International Organization of Employers.

The UN's International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states, "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests."

It doesn't say "except in Ontario for those on workfare." It doesn't give that exception, so why don't you believe it applies? If these are jobs they're doing, they ought to have the same human rights that we as a nation defend and are willing to fight for around the world, and I would go further than that: If these are meaningful jobs, as the minister and the government like to say these are, then damn it all, if they're good enough to be designated as jobs, they're good enough to be paid as jobs. But that's not what you're doing. You're doing both. You're saying, "Yes, they're going to do meaningful jobs so we can get them back in the workforce," but, "Oh, no, they're not doing real jobs, because we wouldn't take away anyone else's real job." So which is it? It's one or the other.

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I would argue, and do today, that it again is consistent with the concepts of this government that they want to water down the value of labour. They want to water down what people get for working. I don't care whether you're talking about working sitting at a computer, in a bank, in a factory, cleaning a park, providing security for this place — they're all jobs. If somebody's performing a meaningful job, then there ought to be meaningful pay for that job, period, full stop.

To then add insult to injury, by saying, "In addition to being forced to perform this work we are taking away your right to freedom of association," it's forced labour. I have no doubt in my mind that the history books will determine that's exactly what it was. We've seen it before in other variations. It's forced labour. It's disgusting. It's against the human rights principles of every major international organization in the world, which we proudly belong to and in many cases we're leaders of. But that's okay as far as this government's concerned, because they tend to look at people who are on social assistance as almost being subhuman; they really do.

I didn't hear this government say they were going to cut the incomes of their corporate pals by 22%. I didn't hear them say they were going to cut the incomes of their big financial backers for their election machine by 22%. What they did do, just a few weeks after taking power, was say to the poorest of the poor — how obscene, to the poorest of the poor — "Your income from here on in is almost a quarter less than it was." It's unfathomable to believe that it happened, but it did. Now, to make sure you have total control over this forced workforce, you also eliminate a fundamental human right and guarantee that there's no chance this army of slave labour might unite under the umbrella of, God forbid, a union, because you want to make sure that you're providing an example of what you really think about the value of labour.

I say to anyone who's watching this evening who's not on social assistance and maybe doesn't even belong to a trade union, you better care about this, because if you're one of the lucky ones who's making a half-decent wage, this is the sort of thing that makes it impossible for you to get any more and in fact starts putting pressure on your income to take home less, because it pits workers against workers. When we start introducing workers who aren't even being paid a wage for performing labour, your job is worth less. Teachers' jobs in the marketplace are worth less, and nurses and people who work in factories and people who drive trucks, and people who work anywhere.

Unless you're that small percentage of the population — our latest figures show only 6% of the population earn more than \$80,000, and it's a lot smaller the higher up you get. The overwhelming, vast majority of people, whether they want to admit it or not, regardless of the job they perform and the clothes they wear, work for a living. This is part of watering down that value. Why? Because this government knows that the less money that's paid for labour, the more profits there are.

I've said many times that I do not consider that to be an evil word. There's nothing wrong with profits. There is something wrong with planned profits that are excessive and originate from lowering the value of labour, because you are basically saying: "It's okay for everybody else to live at a lower standard of living so that I can live better. It's not enough for me, up at the very top, to have \$50 million, \$100 million, \$1 billion. I'm entitled to more because I'm smarter and I'm bigger and I'm tougher and I've got more political clout. That's just the way of the world, the law of the jungle, and you just better get used to it, you bunch of wimps."

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): That's certainly not my vision of the world.

Mr Christopherson: That is exactly your vision of the world, Minister. It's your bill. You ought to be hanging your head in shame that you've attached yourself to this. I have no doubt that by the time your political career is finished you will regret this — at least you should, in my opinion, because any decent human being should be opposed and be shameful of supporting something that says to those who are already at the very bottom of our social system, "You're going to get less and I'm going to take away one of your human rights that prevents you from changing that." That's exactly what you're doing here.

Those are my three points: that you're lowering the value of labour; that this goes against every principle we believe in as long as it's in some other country; that every worker out there ought to be concerned about this, because it is going to affect your standard of living, it is going to affect the amount of money and benefits you get for the job you perform. For some folks I would say it means your job is on the line, because they're got to be performing some kind of work.

You can't have it both ways, Minister. I hear her mumbling over there under her breath. You can't have it both ways. You cannot say that these are not make-work projects and at the same time say they're not taking away anyone's job. It's one of the two. It's either meaningful work that someone ought to be hired and paid a decent wage and benefit for, or it's just some goofy make-work project that really doesn't have a lot of value but you need to show it to make your statistics work. It's one or the other. It can't be both.

Now we know, of course, it's not just public sector jobs, because that's been an abysmal failure, which, by the way, this kind of concept has been all the way through history. It doesn't work. That needs to be said. It just doesn't work. But now you've started to talk about the idea you're going to introduce it into the private sector. It does not take weeks of study to recognize that if they're not make-work projects and you're going into the public sector and performing legitimate work and now you're going into the private sector to perform legitimate work and you feel the need to deny those forced labourers the right to form a union, freedom of association, clearly you're meaning to take away real jobs. That's the only thing it can mean.

But you won't see it that way. I don't believe for a second that I'm convincing any of you of anything. You're set in your ways. You've decided the road you're going to go down. The fact that you're violating every principle of international law makes this all the more disgusting, because you know it now; it's apparent. The only thing that's going to change this at the end of the day is an election, when they're kicked the hell out of office.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Tilson: I have two questions to the member for Hamilton Centre. The first question, if I have time, is, he was a member of the cabinet in the New Democratic

government. I'm sure he recalls that agricultural workers were historically excluded from the statutory labour relations regime, and your government passed the Agricultural Labour Relations Act in 1994, which said that those workers could unionize. The Conservative government immediately repealed that legislation in 1995 under the Labour Relations and Employment Statute Law Amendment Act.

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There was a legal decision, which I'm sure the member is aware of, which occurred in the Ontario Court (General Division) by Justice Sharpe which was reported in December 1997 which talked about the freedom of association, which you and other members of the opposition have referred to, and whether section 2(d) of the charter has been violated with respect to the piece of legislation that's before us this evening. One of the unions took the government to court on the piece of legislation where we repealed your legislation and said that we went back to the historical position that agricultural workers have been excluded from that law. They gave legal argument as to why the freedom of association doesn't apply with respect to forming a trade union in that specific context.

My question to the member is, if that's the law and you're saying the government is breaking the law with respect to freedom of association, if that's the case, and this case is the law currently in Ontario, why is your submission correct when you say that our government is violating the Charter of Rights, specifically section 2(d) of the Charter of Rights, with respect to the freedom of association?

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): The member for Hamilton Centre certainly brings up a good number of points in terms of this legislation, and he talks a little bit about where it comes from. I have to go back to the days when Mike Harris was the leader of the third party and he took the liberty of parading a woman in front of the cameras who was making somewhere over \$40,000 and said that she would make more money on welfare. It was only hours after he had said that and after a good number of civil servants who worked in this area and on this program, along with myself, literally shuddered that he would say that someone making that kind of money would be better off on welfare — at that point, I could see where Mike Harris was coming from. I think the member for Hamilton Centre carries that idea on, as to where the leader had his aim and whom he was going to aim at. We certainly did see that come through. As I indicated, every civil servant who worked anywhere close to the welfare programs of this province certainly saw that as well. What we've seen today is just the Mike Harris government come through with that initial feeling that had us all very concerned.

The member also referred to the jobs that workfare is taking away from other folks. I have heard from folks in my riding who are quite concerned — young people who had been out clearing snowmobile trails were a prime example last year, university graduates that couldn't get jobs — saying: "What does workfare do for me? Where

does it put me? Does it mean that I now have to go on welfare before I can come back to this job?" I put that question to the former Minister of Community and Social Services and never did get an answer to that particular question. It's another concern that the member for Hamilton Centre raises, a very valid concern when it comes to this bill.

Mrs Boyd: It's always a pleasure to comment on my colleague the member for Hamilton Centre's comments. No one can deny the passion and the vigour with which he makes his remarks. I'm only grateful that I'm not sitting in front of him any more. I told him that before he got up.

The reality he speaks of is lived by many people in this province. I was struck, I couldn't help thinking as he spoke, that in other places, in other times, what this government is proposing to do to welfare recipients would have been called a pogrom. I think it's very important for us to be very clear that the kind of restrictions that were placed on classes of people are very similar to this: a refusal, a very clear refusal, of the recognition of the right of individuals and classes of people to exercise the human rights that every other citizen in those jurisdictions had a right to have.

One of the issues that we really must bring to this government is the reality that they are treating a whole class of people in this province very differently than they would want to be treated or than they would want their families to be treated or than they would want their neighbours to be treated. The essence of this bill is to refuse rights to individuals that every other individual in this province has. Whether they would take them or not, they have a right to do that. Those are rights that are recognized in international law, as my colleague pointed out, rights to which we have signed on as signatories to the international Human Rights Code.

Mr Cullen: I think the member for Hamilton Centre in his remarks hit on a point that I touched on earlier, and that is the whole issue of our rights under the charter. The Minister of Community and Social Services, in whose name this bill has been presented to us, is here in the House tonight. I would like her to participate by using the opportunities that come up. As a matter of fact, I'm sure we would all grant unanimous consent to hear the answer to this question: When the bill came forward in its draft form for approval to her ministry, did she or did she not have an opinion from her staff about the charter implications of her bill? If so, did they not say that there was an extremely strong possibility that this bill would face a charter challenge and that the likelihood was that this bill would not survive a charter challenge?

Our charter does provide for reasonable limits that are justifiable in a free and democratic society. That is why, when we deal with essential services, policemen and firemen can organize but they're limited in their ability to strike. It has been tested in the courts. It has been accepted. The model is there.

One cannot believe that the poor deserve such exceptional treatment. What would happen if they go on strike? It is farcical even to think of it. It is farcical to think of a

single-parent mother with two mouths to feed saying, "Hell, no, I won't take this any more," and rejecting their welfare cheque. It does not happen. This is all a PR effort to beat off with a stick the so-called big bad unions. It's wrong. But I want the minister to answer the question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member's time has expired. The member for Hamilton Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the members who took the time to comment, the members for Kenora, London Centre, Ottawa West and Dufferin-Peel.

I definitely want to get to the issues the member for Dufferin-Peel raised, and I'll try to get to others if my two minutes allow. In answer to his question, first of all, I'm not a lawyer, so I won't pretend to stand here and make the kind of arguments that one would use in a court of law. But I would say this to you: that Professor Adams, who knows an awful lot more about these things than I, and I would suggest you, and also has contact with a lot of other legal experts, constitutional experts who can make those kinds of arguments, is monitoring the debate very carefully, and I suspect that he'll take up that challenge and in short order you and all of us will hear from him why he would believe that this kind of a charter challenge would be upheld in light of the declarations I've read.

Let me also take a second to comment on the mushroom workers you talked about. That's from a community just outside Windsor, and it was the United Food and Commercial Workers Union that organized them. As you well know — and you know this, I know you do; you did when you were in opposition, when you kept talking about the family farm, agricultural workers — the reality is, and you know it or you ought to, the point is, that was a mushroom factory. I had hearings down there on the Ontario Labour Relations Act when you wouldn't, and a number of those workers came forward. You know what they said? Some of them had come to Canada because of democracy. They were fairly new Canadians working in horrible conditions. With tears in their eyes, they said: "I joined a union yesterday, and now I'm told that it's outlawed. I thought this was a democracy." Literally tears running down his face, "I thought this was a democracy." So did I.

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The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): It's my pleasure to be able to speak to Bill 22, and I thank the minister for the opportunity, in particular, to be part of An Act to Prevent Unionization with respect to Community Participation under the Ontario Works Act, 1997.

Ontario Works: Isn't that an exciting two words? Ontario Works. Isn't that what this province is all about? It's about turning a province around; it's about community and being part of the solution; it's about self-respect; it's about self-esteem; it's about participation; it's about respect itself.

It's interesting to listen to the opposition, who tend to say things sometimes one way and the next time say it a little differently. The member for Hamilton Centre made

the comment that only 6% of the people in Ontario made more than \$80,000, and yet for the last couple of years he has been yapping about the fact that we are giving this tax credit to our rich friends. I would suggest to you that what we are doing is giving that tax credit to the working people of this province.

I'd also like to make a comment on the word "work." It appears the member for York South doesn't believe in work. I hope when a new election comes around these people run around their ridings and suggest, "By the way, folks, we don't want any of you to work." I don't know where they think we're going to get the money to pay for the programs and to help folks on social assistance unless somebody works. Should we all not be part of that if we possibly can?

What we're suggesting in this act is that we are moving forward and we are making productive and valuable reforms to the welfare system. We must be doing that, because we've got 250-some-odd thousand off welfare. That in itself, to me, is a major plus, and it's a major plus for the people who got off it, because we all know that many of them have found jobs, both full-time and part-time.

What we are doing is another promise made by this government and a promise kept. I can assure you that we will not allow labour councils to threaten us and suggest that these people must become union members. What will happen if they don't become union members or unionized? What will happen then? Are they off welfare? Do they lose their jobs if they do not become unionized?

It's interesting to note that in Peterborough we had the Winter Games this year, and we had a number of people in the community who wanted to work at the games and were part of the Ontario Works program. People went down there, pointed fingers at them, singled them out and said, "No, you shouldn't be part of this." These people, I suggest, were so embarrassed, because they wanted to do some small thing for their community and they were totally denied that opportunity.

I can tell you this, and I've talked to a number of the folks who are union members in our community, the rank and file does not believe that the Ontario Works participants need to be unionized and be part of the big union concept.

We're suggesting that many of these people want to return to the mainstream workforce, and thank goodness they do. Isn't it exciting for them to be part of this program, to learn, to get the type of help they want to get off dependency on this system and be part of the community and be part of that workforce, helping to make it easier for those other folks who are less fortunate? They are learning new skills. They are also regaining self-sufficiency and self-esteem. They are being part of the community, and I compliment the community groups who are sponsoring these programs who are indeed part of them.

I can tell you this, ladies and gentlemen: I do not support anybody being forced to become union members if

they don't wish to, and that's exactly what would have happened in this particular situation.

Whether it's a part-time job, working into a full-time job — that's what this is all about. When you look at what we're going to do, the employment protection for these folks is still there. Certainly health and safety coverage is there under the workplace health and safety act. Privacy protection, the restrictions of work per month, that type of thing, are all there. Provisions for public and religious holidays, pregnancy and parental leave — it's all part of the workforce that all of us are part of.

I want to make one comment. I want to talk about union dues. Does anybody know anything about union dues? It's my understanding that when you become a member of a union, you have to pay union dues. For the life of me, I can't understand why somebody on social assistance would be asked to contribute part of that money to a union to enrich their coffers. It is absolutely disgusting that they would take money away from shelter, away from clothing, from food. Somebody said they're snatching food off the tables.

When you take money from those folks to pay union dues, I will not tolerate it and I will speak out against it across this province if I have to. Social assistance is for them, not to pay union dues and to increase the membership of unions, which are going down because people are getting fed up with having to pay their dollars to unions. Why would you ask somebody who has finally got a job to go on strike because the big union bosses suggest, "You've got to go on strike, because we don't allow that amount of money"?

These folks want a chance. For goodness' sake, give them the chance. Give them the chance that they don't have all these restrictions. I can't understand why you would want all this. This is a project, not a program. We tried programs in this province for the last 10 years, and they didn't work. These are projects that will help to make these people self-sufficient and a part of the community, which they want.

Wouldn't it be exciting for that person who's been on social assistance to get that phone call that says, "Harry," or "Sarah, you've got a job"? He could get off that phone and run to the kids and say: "Hey, kids, I got a job. I got a job because I learned something from my term on Ontario Works."

That, to me, is the most exciting thing that anybody in this province could do. Many of us in this room possibly, at one time or another, have been out of work. I can remember when I was phoned and told, "Gary, you got that job." That was one of the most exciting things."

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe that the rank-and-file union member does not want these people to be forced on that at all. Big unions are doing that. It's not the rank-and-file; it's the leaders who are scratching and trying to justify their existence at the expense of people who have to pay union dues from social assistance cheques. It is intolerable.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I am pleased to comment on this anti-labour legislation being passed by the government tonight. I'm absolutely astounded that the member for Peterborough would not realize that it was the government of Bill Davis, strongly supported by the present Minister of Community and Social Services, as I recall, which allowed the Rand formula to be used, the Rand formula permitting people to be members of unions.

The compulsory checkoff was permitted by Bill Davis because Bill Davis was engaged in discussions with unions. He had a more balanced approach to things. He engaged in discussions. Some parts of his legislation could be perceived to be favouring management side and some the union side. He came up with a reasonable balance. Not everybody was happy, but there was a reasonable, acceptable balance in the province.

What Bill Davis accepted with the compulsory check-off for union dues was that those who were going to derive the benefits of the collective agreement reached through the negotiating power and the negotiating effort of the union would have to pay for the operation of the union that was able to obtain those benefits for the worker. Bill Davis saw that, his Minister of Labour of the day saw that, and said it was quite acceptable.

The second point I want to make is that this government, which seems to want to get people back to work, has made a drastic cut in adult education allocations at the secondary school level. Many people wish to go back to obtain credits in secondary school when they are adults, or other training, and used to do so within the education system, in boards of education across the province. This government, in its last funding formula, made drastic cuts to that. That would have allowed many people who are on social assistance to obtain the training and education they required to get back into the workforce not only temporarily but for a long time, and this government decided that was not in its mandate.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the anti-union rant from the member for Peterborough and to remind him and so many others of the contribution that unions and workers in unions have made to the quality of life and standard of living of all of us who call Ontario home today.

I don't think there are too many of us who can't trace our roots back, in some direct or indirect way, to some man or woman who, working in a plant, a factory or a workplace, joined a union and through negotiation, sometimes a strike, sometimes the giving up of their time and energy at great expense to themselves, attained some things we take for granted today in the communities in which we live.

In the communities I've lived in, every time the major union went to the negotiation table and fought for an increase in wages, an improvement in work conditions, an increase in benefits that went to paying for health care for children, an increase in pension, everybody in that community gained, because as soon as that contract was signed every workplace in that community was looking at that as the benchmark they all went after. Even the man-

agement types in the workplaces knew that what the unions got, they would get, plus some.

To stand here and make the kind of derogatory remarks about unions that the member has just made and to talk about paying union dues as if somehow it was just money into a big, black hole someplace that didn't pay for anything is just to be so misleading of us and the people out there. I want to stand in my place and say that if it weren't for unions, many of us wouldn't be where we are today, wouldn't be standing here today in this place.

Mr Hastings: I'd like to join the member for Peterborough, particularly in his remarks — you could hear it in his voice and tone — regarding the excitement with which people can get jobs today, opportunities that lead to jobs. I'd like to mention a specific report in Kitchener-Waterloo on CKCO-TV recently, where Steve Parr interviewed a gentleman by the name of Frank. To quote, "Frank...found a job after nearly five years on welfare. It may have saved his life."

I'd like to quote Frank: "One year pass and you don't find a job. Another year pass, you feel down. Like I had many times...I thought I can kill myself. I don't want to live like this any more." I think that's a very forthright, passionate statement about one specific individual who did go on to get work, at a company called Greemark Industries in Cambridge. I suppose members of the opposition would denigrate that.

I want to raise an unfortunate remark that was made by the member for London South. It cannot leave this Legislature without passing. She used a term which I find absolutely horrendous in its implications in the context in which she used it. She may want to reconsider her remarks around the word "pogrom."

I want to read into the record what the American College Dictionary says: "Pogrom: an organized massacre, especially of Jews." I think it's despicable that the member for London South would introduce such a term and then let it slide by, as if members on this side or members in any part of this House want to be associated with any of the activities associated with the word "pogrom" and the implications raised therein. Perhaps she'd like to reconsider that.

Mr Cullen: I'll have to go and dig up the quotation from a German Roman Catholic priest who, during the Second World War, wrote a very fine series of lines in terms of whose rights were violated and who was left to defend him when his rights were violated. Perhaps then the member will understand the association. It belongs in our literature and is something that's important to remember.

I know the government is on an anti-union rant and loves to union-bash, but what this bill is doing goes beyond that. I have to appeal to the Minister of Community and Social Services, the member for Durham East, who is in this room tonight, to level with us on the advice she got. Once she levels with us on the advice she got about how this is not going to survive a charter challenge, it all becomes transparent that this is a public relations exercise to bash unions.

I hate to say this, but the member for Peterborough is right: Someone on welfare doesn't have the money to pay union dues. They don't even have the money to pay dues for your party, my party or any other party unless they really make a sacrifice for something they believe in. In this country, we allow for that freedom of belief, that freedom of expression, that freedom of association.

This government, for some reason — well, we know what the reason is: It is pure, crass public relations politics at its guttermost to go and say, "This class of people are denied the rights that everyone around us here can have." If belonging to a union is so bad for the poor, why don't you take it away from the rest of us? You cannot. The charter is there, thank God.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Peterborough has two minutes to respond.

Mr Stewart: To the member for St Catharines who was talking about Mr Davis, one of the problems with the opposition is that they live in the past. I believe in the future, and I suggest that if they started to do that, it wouldn't take as long and be as tough to turn this province around.

The other thing I was waiting for was for somebody to get up and say, "The member is bashing the unions." The member for Sault Ste Marie said that. The member for Ottawa West said that, that I am against unions. Let me tell you, I'm married to a lady who was secretary of CUPE. I can assure you I'm not against unions. I am against union leaders who are forcing people who don't want to do something into something, forcing them to go on strike, forcing them to be part of this union. That's the problem with this thing.

It was interesting to hear the member for Ottawa West talking about union dues, sacrificing the money they have for food and shelter to pay union dues. Give me a break. If that's what you think, then let's get it in the paper and let's publicize that this man feels you should take some of your money from social assistance to pay union dues instead of buying food or shelter or whatever it is. I re-emphasize the fact that the union rank-and-file member believes very much in making sure that the people on —

Mr Cullen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The foundation of our democracy here is the right to choose.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Further debate?

2020

Mr Grandmaître: I'm delighted to join in the debate on Bill 22. I'll try and stay away from party politics and address the bill, but at the same time, I must point to the government that is introducing this type of legislation.

Bill 142 and Bill 22 are, let's say, the children of what Mr Harris heard just before the 1995 election, that 30% or 40% of the people on welfare were cheaters. "We're going to go after these people." Everybody applauded him. People believed Mr Harris and his party at the time, and they said: "Go out and get them, because I'm sick and tired of paying welfare for these bums, these cheaters. Let's go after them."

Strangely enough, soon after they were elected, some kind of survey was done and it showed that it was not 30% or 40% of the people who were taking advantage of the system; it was only 3% or 4%. But it was too late. They had to introduce legislation to punish these people, and their first act was a reduction of their benefits by 22%. I know the members of the government will say, "But that's 10% higher than any provincial benefits." They may be right, but the cost of living in Ontario is much higher than Prince Edward Island and many other provinces.

Workfare was supposed to work right across the province. Some 650 municipalities were supposed to join in. The minister found out, maybe a year later, that it wasn't working, that people were rejecting it. Municipal governments were saying, "We don't want to get involved." Maybe 50 or 60 municipal governments did introduce workfare, but it didn't last too long and it's still not working.

In Ottawa-Carleton, in the three municipalities I represent, workfare is not working for the simple reason that they simply don't have the jobs, especially in the winter months. You don't send people out to clean parks in the winter months; you have to wait until the summer. They are summer jobs.

What I'm trying to say is that we are trying to punish people who don't deserve it, and this is what the government has to recognize. People who are taking advantage of our system should be punished, but people who are looking for a job should be offered a hand up. As the Premier says every day in the House, "We're giving them a hand up."

Every weekend in my riding office I have people on welfare that have been on welfare for two and three years. I can tell you the story of a former painter who had a back accident and now cannot operate as a painter, so he wants to back to school. They told him: "You're too old. You're 46 years old. What kind of a skill do you expect to have when you leave school?" Four or five months later, adult education was cancelled, so he couldn't go back to school. Here's a man I've known all of my life, who wants to work, and nobody can offer him a job, except if the city of Ottawa were to approve of workfare, then he could work for four or five bucks an hour.

Those people making \$4 or \$5 an hour are very fortunate. I listened to an economist last Saturday, saying, "These workers on welfare, people on workfare, don't contribute a penny to our economy." Not a penny, because they are using every penny to buy food and to pay rent and telephone. This is not improving our economy, and this government is all about our economy. They're saying we have to improve our economy so that people can enjoy all the good things of Ontario. I can tell you, it's not everybody who enjoys the good things of Ontario.

Maybe the majority of the people, 60% or 70% of the people in Ontario, are fortunate enough to have a job, making a reasonable wage and enjoying a 30% income tax cut. But there are a lot of people who simply don't have the ability and they need the government for a hand up so

they can find a job. Send them back to school. Don't cut back adult education, or any other educational program for that matter. I think our society will pay for the day this legislation passes, and other pieces of legislation that we've passed in this Legislature.

Le travail obligatoire n'a jamais fonctionné. Que ce soit en Ontario, que ce soit n'importe où en Europe, le travail obligatoire n'a jamais fonctionné. Et le gouvernement d'aujourd'hui nous impose, ou impose à une majorité de personnes en Ontario qui reçoivent des bénéfices des services sociaux, de travailler, mais par contre, le gouvernement n'offre pas l'occasion à ces gens de se former, de retourner à l'école. On fait des coupures dans le budget de l'éducation, surtout de l'éducation aux adultes. On fait des coupures et ces gens reviennent sur le bien-être. Ils n'ont pas d'autre choix. Ils n'ont pas de formation pour faire autre chose.

Le ministre nous fait parvenir, de temps à autre, des chiffres qui nous indiquent que 150 000 ou 175 000 personnes ne reçoivent plus de bénéfices. Le mois d'après, 200 000 personnes ne reçoivent plus de bénéfices. Je vais vous poser une question. Comment se fait-il que ce gouvernement n'a pas créé 200 000 emplois dans six mois, mais il qu'y a 200 000 personnes qui ne reçoivent plus de bénéfices ? Alors, lorsqu'on regarde les chiffres, ça ne fonctionne plus. J'aimerais que le ministre nous explique qu'est la deuxième phase de ça ce ? Ce soir c'est ainsi seulement un aperçu.

On peut parler de syndicats. Les gens qui veulent travailler s'en foutent, des syndicats. Et les gens qui veulent travailler ne veulent pas faire la grève. Mais, il faut donner l'occasion à ces gens, qui n'ont pas la formation, de leur donner la formation nécessaire, afin qu'ils puissent travailler et revenir à la maison, comme un père de famille, ou une mère de famille, fiers d'avoir contribué à l'économie de l'Ontario. Tant et aussi longtemps qu'on ne donnera pas l'occasion à ces gens de travailler et d'être fiers d'être Ontariens, notre province, laissez-moi vous dire que nous allons avoir des problèmes dans les années à venir.

2030

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Martin: I agree with the member for Ottawa East when he says that people out there in Ontario want to work, that the poor among us, those who are targeted so directly by this government, do in fact want to work. The problem is there isn't work out there; there isn't real, meaningful, well-paid work for all the people who live in Ontario.

The reality is that the economy we're in continues to chug along with about a 9% to 12% unemployment rate. In some areas it's higher than others. In my own community of Sault Ste Marie, it's up around 20% right now. Some say the unofficial unemployment rate is closer to 30%. There's that group of people in every community across this province who just cannot find work because there isn't work.

To pretend for a second that the work you're going to provide through workfare is in any way going to answer to

the aspiration of every person I've ever come across — and I've done a lot of work in the poverty community in my own community and in other places and I haven't met anybody who is happy in their situation, who wants to stay there, who doesn't aspire to something else and who wouldn't do anything asked of them to achieve that.

To do as this government is doing by way of everything, the consistent attack that is happening, and now this latest insult, to not allow them to join a union if they should so choose, to not allow a union to speak for them because they have no voice in the circumstance they find themselves in is, in my mind, beyond the pale. I was astonished when I saw this piece of legislation tabled.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): I stand here having listened to the members for Hamilton Centre and Sault Ste Marie. I listened to the two of them say that the unions created the high standard of living in this province. I would like them to know something. They both belong to large unions. The people who gave the prosperity to this province were the small entrepreneurs, the hundreds of thousands of them who go out every day and work for a living. They take a risk, they put up their homes, they put up everything they possess, and a lot of them go bankrupt trying. I've been on that road. I've been in the union and I've also been an entrepreneur. Some of them succeed. After a while they become rather successful and they make a few extra dollars for all their hard work. In turn, they pay more taxes than anybody in this country.

Mr Martin: Humph.

Mr Ford: You think it's "Humph"? That's a fact that you're not aware of. The ones who get the most money are the unionized people, but the small entrepreneurs hire more people than all the unions put together in this country. That's a fact, and that's who sets the standard of living in this country, not the organized unions. That's a fact, because the people organize companies, they grow to a certain size, then the union moves in on those people when they reach a certain size. But you don't see any unions in very small companies, because they're not interested in that. You don't see them start companies either. That's another fact of life. So you can sit there and "Humph" all you want, because you don't have your facts straight.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : C'est avec plaisir que je prends la parole, après avoir entendu les points soulevés par mon collègue d'Ottawa-Est, le père de la Loi 8, et je l'appuie sur les points apportés.

Tout d'abord, il a référé à la formation. Pourquoi ce gouvernement n'a-t-il pas mis sur pied un programme de formation afin d'aider les personnes qui sont sur le service de bien-être depuis de nombreuses années ? Les raisons pour lesquelles ils ont été sur l'assistance sociale étaient simples : manque de transport public, manque de formation, manque d'argent pour s'inscrire à des cours de formation, manque d'argent pour achat des livres.

Je crois que cette loi 22 est discriminatoire ; ça devait être laissé à la discrétion de toute personne que veut se joindre à un groupe sur le marché du travail. Si l'entreprise est syndiquée, oui, il a le choix de joindre le syndicat

ou non. Mais, si l'entreprise n'est pas syndiquée, encore là, il ne peut pas se joindre à un syndicat. C'est normal. Mais actuellement, le programme n'a aucun plan d'«incentive» pour encourager les personnes à retourner au travail.

Je vais vous donner un exemple très simple. Je connais un étudiant qui est sorti de l'école. Il a voulu retourner sur le marché du travail. Son père et ses grands-parents ont été sur le service social. Il a complété ses études, avec un hypothèque je devrais dire, parce qu'il a dû faire des emprunts, à travers le RAFEO. Son père a dû le supporter à l'emprunt à la banque, et lorsque son père a signé pour l'emprunt, il a perdu son revenu pour le mois qu'il était sur l'assistance sociale.

Donc, je crois que le gouvernement aurait dû mettre sur pied un programme de formation.

Mrs Boyd: I want to congratulate the member for Ottawa East, who certainly didn't lose his focus or concentration on the important issue here despite the antics of the member for Ottawa-Rideau, who attempted to divert him by waving around a certain red document and moving around the room and trying to attract his attention.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): He's been ignoring me for years.

Mrs Boyd: I agree that the member for Ottawa East should continue to ignore the member for Ottawa-Rideau. It sounds like a fine idea.

I want to correct the member for Etobicoke-Humber. While my colleague from Hamilton Centre was indeed a union leader, my colleague from Sault Ste Marie, although he briefly belonged to the Steelworkers when he was in university, did not happen to have the privilege of belonging to a union. He belonged to a much greater collective and was not indeed a union member and does not deserve that kind of label from the member for Etobicoke-Humber.

The reality of this bill is that it prevents people from making choices about how they're going to be represented, what kind of action they're going to take on their own behalf. There's nothing in this bill, as this member for Peterborough suggested, that forces people to join a union. There's nothing at all that has been said that would have forced people to join a union. This bill prevents them from even considering that, prevents that from being possible.

What it really talks about is this government's belief that they can push around the weak and the vulnerable, force them into slots, force them to accept fewer human rights than the rest of the citizens have because this government has decided that their new enemy is big unions, big union bosses.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Ottawa East has two minutes to respond.

Mr Grandmaître: To the members for Sault Ste Marie, Prescott-Russell and London Centre, thank you very much. To the member for Etobicoke-Humber, humph.

Now, let's talk about this bill. I think as legislators we should stop and think about what we're about to do this evening. We're enjoying a great economy at the present time. The Premier is forever bragging about our economy.

He takes it all in: "We did it all. The federal government didn't do a thing about it. We did it all in the province of Ontario."

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He will repeat this in the House every day, but I can tell you that people in Ontario are smart enough to realize that it's not only in Ontario, but it's happening elsewhere. They should be ashamed that they are not providing more services with all those great dollars they're receiving every day — retail sales tax, LCBO, personal income tax. I think we should all share in the great economy of Ontario and it's about time this government smartened up and realized that we do have people suffering in the province of Ontario. Why pick on the most vulnerable?

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Martin: Before I make some comments on this very terrible bill that's before us today, I want to share with the people of Ontario out there and those in the House who perhaps don't know that the government has now tabled in this Legislature another time allocation motion. What's this, the third one this week?

Mr Bradley: The fifth.

Mr Martin: The fifth or sixth this week. A time allocation motion that puts limits on the amount of debate that will happen on legislation that comes before us here, a motion that will limit our ability to take pieces of legislation out across the province for comment from the public, which was the tradition of this place for so many years and has changed so radically by way of the changes to the rules that we all operate under here in this House tonight.

This bill, as well as so many other pieces of legislation that we have before us in this place now, is limited, is being shrunk and we all lose a certain amount of the privilege we come here with whenever this happens.

The other thing that's happening by way of this motion that's tabled to limit debate, limit discussion, limit the public's ability to participate in this debate, is that it is being sent to the justice committee. Do you remember earlier today — the member for St Catharines and the member for London Centre will — that we stood on a point of order in this place to say that a finance bill had been sent to the justice committee in order to bump a section 124 that we had called for to have a public discussion at that committee on the question of the death of Dudley George so that we could get to the bottom of the government's involvement in that and what happens?

This government recognizes probably that it was wrong in having slotted that bill to that committee when it should have gone to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. It may in fact do that. This is impacting on that bill. This is what you're doing with that bill. You're sending it to that committee so that, again, we will not get to the Ipperwash issue on that committee. I don't know what it is you're running away from in that instance.

Interjection: I think we do.

Mr Martin: The truth. We're running away from the truth, running away from taking the cover off that.

This government continues to act in this very draconian way, this very sort of unilateral way, drive it through, damn the torpedoes, no concern at all for the casualties, no concern at all for any process that might bring us to a greater understanding of why it is we find ourselves in this province, at this particular point in time, under such a cloud of violence expressed in so many ways against people.

This brings me to this bill, which is just a continuing of the never-ending attack that this government has made, from before it ever became government, on those in our community who are most vulnerable, most marginalized and most actually in need of our help and not in need of our wrath.

It was interesting in the speech from the throne, and it connects to this bill very clearly for me, how this government took the poor and the unions, organized labour, and criminals and put them all into the same bag and shook it up so that they would demonize every person in those categories, none of them deserving the fate they're getting from this government.

Now, shortly after that, we have the unions being demonized again because they, in wanting to speak for a group in this province who have less and less of a voice to speak for themselves, might begin to gain for them some of the rights and privileges that we who are fortunate enough to have a job in this province so often take for granted, which is the right to organize as a union and to speak to their employer about the conditions under which they will work.

I have to tell you, when this piece of legislation was tabled, I was on my way back to Sault Ste Marie, and as I was shocked that morning in July 1995 when I woke up to discover that you had taken 21.6% away from those in my community who were most in need of that money to feed their children, to continue to have a roof over their heads, to continue to be able to clothe them in the very difficult and cold winters that we have up our way, I was equally as shocked when I saw you bring this bill in which would in a very focused and concentrated way take any opportunities these folks might have had to organize and to speak for themselves in opposition to what is happening to them.

Because in fact what is happening to them by the many ways that you have picked on them and demonized them and blamed them for everything, all the ills that this province is experiencing — and there are some, I think we all have to admit that, and we need to work together to try to overcome them — but to take away from the poor 21.6% of their income and then to take the services they depend on so much, to counsel them, to work with their children, to make sure they have the housing they need and that it's proper and appropriate, to take all that away from them shortly thereafter and then begin the task of changing the legislation so that you will cast in stone all of that to remove in very concrete and important ways every opportunity that these folks have to appeal decisions that go against them and to extend that period of appeal to a

point where I don't know how some of them survive, to be honest with you.

I don't know how a person with two or three kids who finds himself out of work, who goes to the social assistance office for some help, who is told, no, he doesn't qualify, who then has to go through an appeal process that could take a month or two to get any income coming in, if they have no family around — and in this day and age in the economy we're living in, that is more usual than not — how they get along, and how it is that some of them actually survive to be again at some point down the road contributing members in the community in which they live, which is what they all want.

You're creating, by doing all of this, in my view, another class of citizen. You're pushing them, you're marginalizing them, you're demonizing them, you're taking away any dignity they have or had, and at the end of the day you're going to create a situation where a whole lot of them are going to become desperate.

The only vehicle out there — and this is an international experience, I have to say to those who are interested in this — available to a lot of people who find themselves under the gun or under attack or under pressure from an individual or a group or a corporation or an industry that is abusing or abusive is to gather together as a group and form a union that can then take the concerns of that particular group to whatever body it is, can act to correct some of those abuses. You've taken that away.

I don't know what else you can do to these folks, although today I noticed in a circular I picked up in downtown Toronto — we all know of the increasing numbers of homeless people who call Toronto streets their home now, but they're being told now that they can't even panhandle for the loose change that might go a way to providing them with perhaps a sandwich or a cup of coffee on a cold and wintry morning. They're now being picked up if they're panhandling around a TTC entrance or exit and are being charged. How much further are we going to go?

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The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Questions and comments?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I've listened to this debate, and it's quite interesting. I can understand that the honourable members disagree, but where we do agree is that people on welfare do want off welfare. That's why we've brought in Ontario Works, because we believe that people are better off working and that people are better off with jobs. That's why it is so encouraging that the economy in Ontario is back leading the nation. Because of economic growth and our economic reforms, we've been setting records in this province for job creation. We also know that Ontario Works is helping people get into those jobs. We've had an almost 20% decline in the caseload, and we know, because we went out and asked the question, that the majority of people leaving the caseload are doing it for employment-related reasons.

I would also like to say that the claim of the opposition that somehow or other this bill is violating fundamental

rights is not true. People on welfare can belong to unions. People on welfare can have jobs that are part-time in unionized workplaces. They can participate in those unionized activities. Nothing in this piece of legislation prohibits them from doing that, nor should it.

It simply states in this legislation that for the purposes of a community placement, we don't believe that people on welfare should be able to go out on strike. But if they are members of unions in other venues, that's certainly acceptable. There is no problem with that, nor should there be a problem with that.

The final point I'd like to make — there have been comments about our welfare rates — is that the welfare rates in Ontario are 16% above the average of the other nine provinces. We have one of the more generous programs, which I think most Ontarians certainly support, but they asked for a program that will work, that gets people where they want to be, where we agree with the opposition that they want to be: in paid jobs. Our economic reforms and the economic growth are producing those jobs, and Ontario Works is helping link people up with those jobs.

Mr Cullen: I'm pleased to follow the minister in responding to this debate about her bill. It is An Act to Prevent Unionization with respect to Community Participation under the Ontario Works Act, and it does say explicitly that "no person shall do any of the following with respect to his or her participation in a community participation activity:

"1. Join a trade union.

"2. Have the terms and conditions under which he or she participates determined through collective bargaining.

"3. Strike."

I asked in the course of this debate more than once for the minister to tell us whether she had been given advice about whether this thing could withstand a challenge to the charter. She has not answered that. In fact, when she says that this bill is to stop people who are in a community placement from going on strike, what she actually is doing — I can't believe that anyone in that position would actually find the time or have the money to join a union, but her legislation forbids them the ability to choose.

In this democracy, there has to be some compelling reason to override the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and she has not demonstrated to this House why we should have such draconian legislation that clearly violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I ask the minister tonight, for the third time — she's been in this House all this time — can she not confirm to this House that indeed she received advice from her staff that this legislation would not withstand a charter challenge, that it violates the rights of any individual to choose? Quite frankly, I don't think very many people who are on welfare would so choose, but it is a right and it's their choice, not this government's choice or any other person's choice, no matter what our personal beliefs are. This is what makes up a free country. Minister, please answer that.

Mrs Boyd: It was a pleasure to hear from the minister in response to the member for Sault Ste Marie, clearly trying to do some damage control around some of the rather extreme comments that have been made by her colleagues around this debate.

The member for Sault Ste Marie speaks out of his passion and his understanding for those who are less fortunate, and he is quite right. This is only one of a number of actions that this government has taken to demonize the poor, to make them scapegoats among a population that is increasingly concerned about the uncertainty that faces them, and that uncertainty faces them largely because of many of the actions of this government in attacking the public services in general.

This act was built out of a fit of pique. It was simply a knee-jerk reaction, which is typical of this right-wing government, to statements made by some who said it would be a good thing for those being forced into forced labour situations by Bill 142, by this government, to have a collective voice to protect their rights. This government has denied to those who are working as a result of Bill 142, who are being forced to labour in community services — and frankly, those community services often feeling coerced into accepting this program because of the threats that they would lose the support of the government. This government is now saying that these people cannot join together to have a collective voice. That's not surprising. This government tries to shut down everyone who opposes their viewpoint.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): We're indeed blessed today, I guess. What happens when Mr Wildman isn't here is that you get Tony Martin overload. We certainly compliment him for the number of times he's been on his feet today, but I must say that once again he's dead wrong. He's dead wrong about why this bill is important and why it doesn't do any of the things you're suggesting.

Mrs Boyd: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member continually refers to people by name rather than by the riding they represent.

The Speaker: All right. Yes, it is true.

Mr Gilchrist: You're absolutely right. "Continually refers?" Just the one time, the same way you spent dollars more than once, I guess, if you take these things that way.

The reality is that we're the first government to undertake any kind of study of what actually happens to people when they go off welfare. As you've heard already in here today, 62% of the people, and those were the ones we could find, have gotten jobs. That's without the benefits, in many cases, of the kind of skills upgrading, the kind of development of contacts, the kind of development of higher education that will come from being part of a workfare assignment.

The reality is that over 260,000 people have successfully signed on to workfare programs, 260,000 people who are now getting the tools to make something better of themselves. On the other hand, what do we have? We have CUPE, the labour council of London, a number of labour groups suggesting that somehow they should

subvert that process, should deny those people the right to take a step forward, to get higher learning, to get contacts, to get job placements and co-ops. That's what they want to do. They've stated publicly that they want to do this to harass the agencies that are working with these people — not with us; with the people who want a better shake for themselves and for their families.

The bottom line is that of course it's inappropriate to unionize co-op placements. We're moving forward. It's an important addition.

Mr Bradley: I enjoyed the speech from the member. I want to say once again that what the member must wonder about is how it is that a government that says it wants to integrate people back into the workforce would cut so much money out of adult education, adult education that was being delivered by secondary schools across the province. I would have thought that if they were genuinely interested in getting the people back into the economy, back, as they would say, into being productive individuals in the workforce, they would not have cut drastically the funding for adult education at the secondary school level.

In Lincoln county, which we now call the district school board of Niagara and under the auspices of the Roman Catholic school board of Niagara —

Mr Gilchrist: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: It was my mistake, but he's up now.

Mr Gilchrist: No, Mr Speaker. I believe that four comments have been done, and —

The Speaker: Member for Scarborough East, you're right. I made the mistake and gave him two minutes. I'll allow him to finish.

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Mr Gilchrist: Are you going to go round a second time?

The Speaker: Stop the clock. I'm not debating you.

Mr Gilchrist: That was a question.

The Speaker: No, it wasn't.

Interjection.

The Speaker: And to the member for Ottawa-Rideau, I don't want this any more. I want to be very clear to this House and I'll tell you now. If you want to heckle each other, heckle each other. The next person who heckles me, I'm naming.

Member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I certainly will not be the next person to heckle the Speaker, on that basis alone. The Speaker has a difficult job to do. You have to understand that. When he makes a ruling, I always respect that ruling. Sometimes I agree, sometimes I disagree, but I respect it.

I want to go back to the adult education situation. In Niagara we had a lot of people who wanted to take advantage of adult education. They want to get back in the workforce. They may want to upgrade themselves in terms of their high school work that they did not complete at a previous time, or they may want to get some kind of specialized education. We have seen considerable cut-backs. The member for St Catharines-Brock can go to the adult learning centre that they're going to close down in St Catharines. Many people are going to be denied that

opportunity. That would have been perfect to help people to get back as productive members of our economy.

The Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie has two minutes to respond.

Mr Martin: I want to thank all those who took the time to respond to my comments and thank those on this side of the House for their support. It's unfortunate that we continue to get from the other side the same misinformation, the same untruths, the same mantra about the poor that has now become part of the gospel according to Mike Harris and the right wing and the Common Sense Revolutionaries of Ontario.

The question that all of us in this province who have any conscience at all, who have any moral ethic left, have to ask is, why? Why would you target the poor in this way? Why that group of people, who are so defenceless, who are already so vulnerable and so marginalized? The only conclusion I can come to, as I look across the way at the smiling face of Mr Ford —

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): The member for Etobicoke-Humber.

Mr Martin: — the member for Etobicoke-Humber, is that it's done for the crassest of political reasons. You have to have a scapegoat. You have to have a straw man. You have to have somebody you can blame for all the ills we're all struggling with at this time.

We hear of the jobs that this government is creating and the fact that so many people have gone off welfare and are now working. Well, that doesn't fly against the reality that we still have 9% or 10% unemployment on average across this province. That's the reported unemployment. In my own community we have somewhere between 20% and 30% unemployment. People who find themselves on social assistance are not the people who get the few jobs there are.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Wettlaufer: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to take part in the discussion on Bill 22, the Prevention of Unionization Act (Ontario Works), 1998.

I want to preface my remarks by saying that the critics who have said that this bill is anti-union are full of just so much drivel. During the last campaign, I was actively supported by members of the building trades council of Waterloo region and by the auto workers of Waterloo region.

Mr Bradley: The auto workers?

Mr Wettlaufer: Yes, the auto workers, I say to the member for St Catharines. In fact, the members of the auto workers indicated to me that if we did not carry through on our platform, the Common Sense Revolution, they would camp out on my doorstep on a regular basis. I haven't seen one of them yet. They haven't been camping out on my doorstep. The building trades council, guess what? Many of these people are my friends. We meet socially and they support what we're doing. Not only do they support what we're doing with the Common Sense Revolution; they support this bill.

This bill is one of the smallest bills we have introduced in this House, but it is the pinnacle point which highlights

the philosophical, the political and the economic differences which separate our government and the two opposition parties. We know what should and must be done after 10 years of mismanagement of this province's economy. We know what must and should be done after seeing a province racked by recession when the rest of the country was booming along quite nicely. The rest of the country had produced 400,000 new jobs when the last government of Ontario had lost 200,000 jobs. Isn't that hard to believe? And now the rest of the country isn't producing the number of jobs that we are in this province.

Mr Stewart: We must be doing something right.

Mr Wettlaufer: We certainly are doing something right. Even Sid Ryan understands that this bill — get this — could affect him, because he recognizes the effectiveness of Ontario Works. He recognizes the effectiveness of the workfare program in Ontario, because if he didn't recognize it he wouldn't be bothered trying to unionize the workfare participants. Why would Mr Ryan be so concerned about a few people, unless he thought it could increase the coffers of his unions?

So 260,000 participants in workfare, 250,000 less people on the dole in this province and 345,000 new jobs since we became the government: Is there not a relationship? I believe there's a relationship. But the opposition parties fail to understand that there's a parallel.

Maybe I was unfair to Sid Ryan. Maybe he has an altruistic reason —

Mr Stewart: No, you weren't.

Mr Wettlaufer: I'm not unfair? I'm just saying that maybe he has an altruistic reason for opposing Ontario Works. Maybe. Do you believe that, Mr Speaker? If you believe it, I've got some oceanfront property in Arizona for you. Mr Ryan is interested in only one thing. The people in my riding repeatedly see it. They repeatedly tell me that this man plays footloose and fancy-free with the facts. I don't say that, Mr Speaker. You know I would never say that. I sometimes wonder why the members of the opposition support him, when they must see what the members of my riding see, that he plays footloose and fancy-free with the facts, but that's their choice, I guess.

Sid Ryan does have other union leaders who think like him, people like Earl Manners, Marshall Jarvis, Judy Darcy, Bob White, Gord Wilson. These are real pillars of the community. You know they are.

Mr Gilchrist: Put them on the wall of shame.

Mr Wettlaufer: You'd better believe there's a wall of shame, I say to Mr Gilchrist. These union leaders are interested in doing only one thing. They're interested in sending out a political message. They don't care about workfare. They want to oppose what this government is doing. That's all they're interested in. The members of the opposition buy the opinions of this minority of people. They buy it. They support it.

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Why do the members of these unions and the union leaders jeopardize what the social agencies are trying to achieve? Why do they jeopardize these people who are receiving the benefits of what the social agencies are

doing? Why do these union leaders threaten United Way? Why do these union leaders threaten the Heart and Stroke Foundation? They threaten them with the cutoff of funding if they participate in these social functions for the betterment of the unemployed, the people on welfare who want to participate in workfare. Why do they do that?

Interjection: Bullying.

Mr Wettlaufer: Well, they're bullies. Yes, they are. I say to the member, that's exactly what they are, and they're cowards. They're definitely cowards.

Interjection: Who?

Mr Wettlaufer: Who? The union leaders. Not all of them, mind you, not all of them. Only the ones I mentioned.

Interjection: How about Sid Ryan?

Mr Wettlaufer: Oh, Sid Ryan, he's the biggest coward of all, definitely. I wouldn't say that he plays foot-loose and fancy-free with the facts, though.

Prior to the election, we knew what we had to do to help welfare recipients. I have said repeatedly in this House and outside the House that the best welfare is a job. We knew what we had to do. We had to create an environment in which jobs could be created to help these people's lots in life. We listened to the business owners, who we thought would know best how to create jobs. Certainly government hadn't demonstrated for 10 years that it knew how to create jobs. We listened, we learned and we acted. I repeat that. We listened, we learned and we acted.

We didn't create the 350,000 jobs in the province; small business created the 350,000 jobs in the province. Small business, businesses that are not going to be unionized. People of the ilk of Sid Ryan and Earl Manners etc could see their union base eroding, and they knew they weren't going to strengthen that union base in small business. They are fighting it every step of the way. They don't want to see this province become prosperous, because their power diminishes.

The members of this government believe the business owners who know how to create jobs. Unlike the former NDP government, which was viewed by these same businesses as anti-business, we are viewed as pro-business; certainly, because they create jobs. How often do we have to repeat it? They're the ones who create jobs. It is one of the fundamental differences between how we operate and how they operate. They lost 200,000 jobs in the five years they were in business. They knew how to create jobs, the former government said. They lost 200,000 jobs in five years. In three years, we have an environment in which 365,000 jobs have been created. We listened to the taxpaying voters and the business owners. We listened, we heard and we acted.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Michlash: It's always interesting to listen to the member for Kitchener. He spoke a little bit about a political message. I must remind him of a political message we're hearing loud and clear from someone I have a lot of respect for and someone I know a few of the Conservative members have a lot of respect for, that being the former Conservative Premier of the province, a very well-

respected Premier, Premier Davis, as well a former Minister of Labour. In a quote, he said that one word of advice he got from his late mother was that she said, "Billy, moderation in all things." That's the message he continues to carry throughout the province. I think that's exactly the message people may have thought they were getting when they elected this government to power, in terms of moderation.

But I can tell you, with the assault the various groups have seen, whether it be the firefighters of the province, the police forces of the province, teachers, doctors, the taxpayers, moderation is not something they're thinking.

Whenever I hear members such as the member for Kitchener get up, we certainly find that it's not moderation the people of Ontario are getting. I would just like to suggest that as they proceed over the next year, as we move through to the next election, they might want to remember what the former Premier often says and the message he brings, a very clear message, where he says the people of Ontario felt but yet did not get what they thought they were getting in terms of electing this government. Again, moderation, not the things we're seeing in terms of going against the most vulnerable in our society, the poor and the needy, as this government has done.

Mrs Boyd: It's really interesting, as this debate has gone on, that the tone from the Conservatives has changed perceptibly from one of moderation, as my colleague suggested might be more appropriate, to one of vindictiveness and viciousness, personal attacks on individuals, which of course I know, Mr Speaker, you couldn't do anything about, because you can do that when it's about individuals within this chamber, but you can't do it when that kind of viciousness is about others in society.

It is very clear, when members like the member for Kitchener get up, that this is about a concerted anti-union, anti-labour position of this government. The minister, of course, spoke with moderation. She almost fooled a lot of the people into believing this is about being helpful to those who need a hand up, not a handout. She's very good at it. She could give some lessons to those of you who let your benevolent mask slip once in a while and do a rant as the member for Kitchener did, which clearly shows the anti-union bias of this government, that clearly fits into the kind of efforts this government is making to bash unions, to crash through the ability of unions to represent their members.

I would remind the member for Kitchener that under labour law union leaders are required to represent the interests of their members; that is their job under the Labour Relations Act, and they can be charged by their members if they do not. They are simply doing their job, and they are not to be attacked in the vicious way this member has done because they are doing that job.

Mr Guzzo: I want to commend the member for Kitchener for his comments, and I want to compare them in this debate to the comments made earlier by the member for Ottawa East. One would have to wonder whether they live in the same province. One would have to wonder whether they're talking about the same economy.

The Speaker: No, member for Ottawa-Rideau, you sometimes circumvent this process to some degree, but you can't tell me you're not going to comment with respect to those comments.

Mr Gilchrist: She has.

The Speaker: I'm sick of listening to you, member for Scarborough East.

Member for Ottawa-Rideau, you must only comment on the comments made by the member for Kitchener. The member for Ottawa East wasn't even speaking at this time.

Mr Guzzo: With great respect, sir, before you arrived, the member for Ottawa East was speaking, and I wanted to compare the comments. I find it offensive that you would not let me do that.

The Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau, you're testing my patience this time. You can't compare. The member for Ottawa East, whom I don't even see here, isn't even in the chamber, didn't speak. Either respond to the comments made or don't respond.

Mr Guzzo: In light of the fact, Mr Speaker, that you've taken two thirds of my time, I think I'll take your second alternative and refuse to respond.

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The Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr Cullen: The member for Kitchener I believe has revealed the government's plan of action. He spoke with his usual vigour, and he referred to union leaders. He blamed Syd Ryan for this bill, he blamed Earl Manners for this bill, he blamed Judy Darcy for this bill, he blamed Bob White for this bill, and he blamed somebody else, but I just couldn't get it down in time.

My comments are directed to the members opposite. Bash the unions all you like, but this bill takes away a fundamental right from Canadians who live in Ontario. I have said this time and again: I have challenged the Minister of Community and Social Services, whose bill this is, whom the member for Kitchener stood up to defend, and I have asked the minister to come clean with this House and tell us whether or not she received advice about this bill as to whether it would stand a challenge to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Nothing the member for Kitchener said justifies taking away this fundamental right from this class of people. I don't have a problem with him. I disagree with him, but he has the right to stand up here and bash Sid Ryan all he likes. But when one wants to deal with freedom of choice, to choose whether to associate, whether it's Sid Ryan's union or not, whether it's the Conservative Party or not, that right rests with the individual. That's the way it is, how democracy works in this country. That's the way it ought to be.

Quite frankly, I don't think very many people who live in poverty would choose this, but it's their right. It's not up to the member here to dictate by using the power of this Legislature to take that right away. Battle for the hearts and minds yourselves, but don't take away people's rights.

The Speaker: Member for Kitchener, a response?

Mr Wettlaufer: I find it interesting that the member for Ottawa West would talk about taking away people's rights. The people's rights mean the right to a job. They want a job, and they want to be able to upgrade their standards, upgrade their skills, upgrade their education in order to get that job. That's what workfare is all about. Ontario Works is a program that is designed to do that.

But the member for Ottawa West and others of his ilk are more interested in the unionization of someone who doesn't care about being unionized, someone who really only cares about acquiring skills and education and a job. Let's be real.

Then we have the member for London Centre getting up and talking about this being an anti-union bill. What absolute nonsense. I prefaced my remarks when I first got up and I explained how the auto workers in Waterloo region and the building trades council in Waterloo region not only support me but support this government. They support the Common Sense Revolution. They are actively telling us time and again that the programs we are carrying out are so badly needed.

I don't know what the problem is. These people obviously don't listen. They don't listen in here, and they certainly don't listen to their constituents, because I am sure their constituents are telling them the same thing my constituents are telling me.

The Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Bradley: I'm pleased that I have at least some time to address the many aspects of this bill.

Mr Guzzo: Watch the Speaker doesn't grab your time.

Mr Bradley: While the member for Ottawa-Rideau says the Speaker is going to grab my time, I don't think he will, because I'm going to stay on topic and I'm not going to challenge the Speaker. If I am going off topic, I certainly won't announce to the Speaker that I'm going off topic.

Mr Guzzo: You can't —

The Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau, I name you.

Mr Guzzo was escorted from the chamber.

Mr Bradley: The problem that the people who are involved in this program will encounter if they have to deal with a Ministry of Labour office is that the Ministry of Labour offices in most communities are backed up. So when you say they may need the assistance of a trade union or a labour union, they cannot seek the same kind of assistance from a labour office. Whether you're an employer or an employee, there's a distinct problem out there.

I'm sure many members are getting these kinds of calls, where people are not being appropriately paid or where the Employment Standards Act of Ontario is being abrogated and they're being told by people in the offices of the Ministry of Labour in many communities, including St Catharines, that it could be up to eight or 10 months before their problem could possibly be resolved. I really worry about these people. These are the most vulnerable people we're talking about now. If they do not have the redress of officials of the Ministry of Labour, then they are vulnerable to exploitation. I know no member of this

Legislature would want to see individuals in our community exploited.

In order to address some of the problems these people have, we will have to ensure that we have the appropriate resources and the appropriate staff in Ministry of Labour offices so that people who have lost their wages, for instance, who are not being appropriately paid, who are being exploited in one way or another, will have that opportunity to meet with representatives of the Ministry of Labour, have them pursue the issue and make a determination of who was in the right and who was in the wrong. That is simply not happening, and that is why some of these people will be seeking the assistance of a union in order to do this.

The second thing I mentioned is the fact that all of us want to see people get retrained, get more education. Many of them have gone to boards of education, which have some convenient classes available to them, to upgrade themselves, to get back in the workforce. The ability to get back in the workforce is enhanced considerably by this ability to receive this adult education or

continuing education. What I'm concerned about is that we're going to see much less of this in the year to come, perhaps in the years to come, because we have seen significant cuts in the allocation of funding for adult education and continuing education in our communities. Many of these programs have been highly successful. A lot of people have had that good feeling that some members are talking about in the House, of being able to get back in the workforce because they've been able to upgrade their skills, upgrade their training and upgrade their education. I would hope that the government would reconsider that policy and inject funding back into that continuing education, to help people who are on social assistance get back in the workforce, where they rightfully belong and where they should be.

I see that we have reached 9:30 of the clock, so I should adjourn the debate.

The Speaker: It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2129.

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